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Tom Bailey's Adventures

OR,

THE STORY OF A BAD BOY:

BY

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

TORONTO:

J. ROSS ROBERTSON, 67 YONGE STREET.

1878.

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THE STORY OF A BAD BOY.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH I INTRODUCE MYSELF.

This is the story of a bad boy. Well, not such a very bad boy, but a pretty bad boy; and I ought to know, for I am, or rather I was, that boy myself.

Lest the title should mislead the reader, I hasten to assure him here that I have no dark confessions to make. I call my story the story of a bad boy, partly to distinguish myself from those faultless young gentlemen who generally figure in narratives of this kind, and partly because I really was *not* a cherub. I may truthfully say I was an amiable, impulsive lad, blessed with fine digestive powers, and no hypocrite. I didn't want to be an angel and with the angels stand; I didn't think the missionary tracts presented to me by the Rev. Wibird Hawkins were half so nice as Robinson Crusoe; and I didn't send my little pocket-money to the natives of the Feejee Islands, but spent it royally in peppermint-drops and taffy candy. In short, I was a real human boy, such as you may meet anywhere in New England, and no more like the impossible boy in a story-book than a sound orange is like one that has been sucked dry. But let us begin at the beginning.

Whenever a new scholar came to our school, I used to confront him at recess with the following words: "My name's Tom Bailey; what's your name?" If the name struck me favorably, I shook hands with the new pupil cordially; but if it didn't, I would turn on my heel, for I was particular on this point. Such names as Higgins, Wiggins, and Spriggins were deadly affronts to my ear; while Langdon, Wallace, Blake, and the like, were passwords to my confidence and esteem.

Ah me! some of those dear fellows are rather elderly boys by this time,—lawyers, merchants, sea-captains, soldiers, authors, what not? Phil. Adams (a special good name that Adams) is consul at Shanghai, where I picture him to myself with his head

closely shaved,—he never had too much hair,—and a long pigtail hanging down behind. He is married, I hear; and I hope he and she that was Miss Wang Wang are very happy together, sitting cross-legged over their diminutive cups of tea in a sky-blue tower hung with bells. It is so I think of him; to me he is henceforth a jewelled mandarin, talking nothing but broken China. Whitcomb is a judge, sedate and wise, with spectacles balanced on the bridge of that remarkable nose which, in former days, was so plentifully sprinkled with freckles that the boys christened him Pepper Whitcomb. Just to think of little Pepper Whitcomb being a judge! What would he do to me now, I wonder, if I were to sing out "Pepper!" some day in court? Fred Langdon is in California, in the native-wine business,—he used to make the best locorice-water I ever tasted! Binny Wallace sleeps in the old South Burying-Ground; and Jack Harris, too, is dead,—Harris, who commanded us boys, of old, in the famous snow-ball battles of Slater's Hill. Was it yesterday I saw him at the head of his regiment on its way to join the shattered army of the Poto-mac? Not yesterday, but six years ago. It was at the battle of the Seven Pines. Gallant Jack Harris, that never drew rein until he had dashed into the Rebel battery! So they found him,—lying across the enemy's guns.

How we have parted, and wandered, and married, and died! I wonder what has become of all the boys who went to the Temple Grammar School at Rivermouth when I was a youngster?

"All, all are gone, the old familiar faces!"

It is with no ungentle hand I summon them back, for a moment, from that Past which has closed upon them and upon me. How pleasantly they live in my memory! Happy, magical Post, in whose fairy atmosphere even Conway, mine ancient foe, stands forth transfigured, with a sort of dreamy glory encircling his bright red hair!

With the old school formula I commence these sketches of my boyhood. My name is Tom Bailey; what is yours, gentle reader? I take it for granted it is neither Wiggins nor Spriggins, and that we shall get on famously together, and be capital friends forever.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH I ENTERTAIN PECULIAR VIEWS

I was born at Rivermouth, but, before I had a chance to become very well acquainted with that pretty New England Town, my parents removed to New Orleans, where my father invested his money so securely in the banking business that he was never able to get any of it out again. But of this hereafter.

I was only eighteen months old at the time of the removal, and it didn't make much difference to me where I was, because I was so small; but several years later, when my father proposed to take me North to be educated, I had my own peculiar views on the subject. I instantly kicked over the little negro boy who happened to be standing by me at the moment, and, stamping my foot violently on the floor of the piazza, declared that I would not be taken away to live among a lot of Yankees!

You see I was what is called "a Northern man with Southern principles." I had no recollection of New England: my earliest memories were connected with the South, with Aunt Chloe, my old negro nurse, and with the great ill-kept garden in the centre of which stood our house,—a whitewashed stone house it was, with wide verandas,—shut out from the street by lines of orange, fig, and magnolia trees. I knew I was born at the North, but hoped nobody would find it out. I looked upon the misfortune as something so shrouded by time and distance that maybe nobody remembered it. I never told my schoolmates I was a Yankee, because they talked about the Yankees in such a scornful way it made me feel that it was quite a disgrace not to be born in Louisiana, or at least in one of the Border States, and this impression was strengthened by Aunt Chloe, who said, "dar wasn't no gentleman in the Norf no way," and on one occasion terrified me beyond measure by declaring that, "if any of dem mean whites tried to git her away from marster, she was jes' gwine to knock 'em on the head wid a gourd!"

The way this poor creature's eyes flashed, and the tragic air with which she struck at an imaginary "mean white," are among the most vivid things in my memory of those days.

To be frank, my idea of the North was

about as accurate as that entertained by the well-educated Englishmen of the present day concerning America. I supposed the inhabitants were divided into two classes,—Indians and white people; that the Indians occasionally dashed down on New York, and scalped any woman or child (giving the preference to children) whom they caught lingering in the outskirts after nightfall; that the white men were either hunters or schoolmasters, and that it was winter pretty much all the year round. The prevailing style of architecture I took to be log-cabins.

With this delightful picture of Northern civilization in my eye, the reader will easily understand my terror at the bare thought of being transported to Rivermouth to school, and possibly will forgive me for kicking over little black Sam, and otherwise misconducting myself, when my father announced his determination to me. As for kicking little Sam,—I *always* did that, more or less gently, when anything went wrong with me.

My father was greatly perplexed and troubled by this unusually violent outbreak, and especially by the real consternation which he saw written in every line of my countenance. As little black Sam picked himself up, my father took my hand in his and led me thoughtfully to the library.

I can see him now as he leaned back in the bamboo chair and questioned me. He appeared strangely agitated on learning the nature of my objections to going North, and proceeded at once to knock down all my pine-log houses, and scatter all the Indian tribes with which I had populated the greater portion of the Eastern and Middle States.

"Who on earth, Tom, has filled your brain with such silly stories?" asked my father, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"Aunt Chloe, sir; she told me."

"And you really thought your grandfather wore a blanket embroidered with beads, and ornamented his leggings with the scalps of his enemies?"

"Well, sir, I didn't think that exactly."

"Did n't think that exactly? Tom, you will be the death of me."

He hid his face in his handkerchief, and, when he looked up, he seemed to have been suffering acutely. I was deeply moved myself, though I did not clearly understand what I had said or done to cause him to feel so badly. Perhaps I had hurt his feelings by thinking it even possible that Grandfather Nutter was an Indian warrior.

My father devoted that evening and several subsequent evenings to giving me a clear and succinct account of New England; its early struggles, its progress, and

its present condition,—faint and confused glimmerings of all which I had obtained at school, where history had never been a favorite pursuit of mine.

I was no longer unwilling to go North; on the contrary, the proposed journey to a new world full of wonders kept me awake nights. I promised myself all sorts of fun and adventures, though I was not entirely at rest in my mind touching the savages, and secretly resolved to go on board the ship—the journey was to be made by sea—with a certain little brass pistol in my trousers-pocket, in case of any difficulty with the tribes when we landed at Boston.

I could n't get the Indian out of my head. Only a short time previously the Cherokees—or was it the Camanches?—had been removed from their hunting-grounds in Arkansas; and in the wilds of the Southwest the red men were still a source of terror to the border settlers. "Trouble with the Indians" was the staple news from Florida published in the New Orleans papers. We were constantly hearing of travellers being attacked and murdered in the interior of that State. If these things were done in Florida, why not in Massachusetts?

Yet long before the sailing day arrived I was eager to be off. My impatience was increased by the fact that my father had purchased for me a fine little Mustang pony, and shipped it to Rivermouth a fortnight previous to the date set for our own departure,—for both my parents were to accompany me. The pony (which nearly kicked me out of bed one night in a dream), and my father's promise that he and my mother would come to Rivermouth every other summer, completely resigned me to the situation. The pony's name was *Gitana*, which is the Spanish for gypsy; so I always called her—she was a lady pony—Gypsy.

At length the time came to leave the vine-covered mansion among the orange-trees, to say good by to little black Sam (I am convinced he was heartily glad to get rid of me), and to part with simple Aunt Chloe, who, in the confusion of her grief, kissed an eyelash into my eye, and then buried her face in the bright bandana turban which she had mounted that morning in honor of our departure.

I fancy them standing by the open garden gate; the tears are rolling down Aunt Chloe's cheeks; Sam's six front teeth are glistening like pearls; I wave my hand to him manfully, then I call out "good bye" in a muffled voice to Aunt Chloe; they and the old home fade away. I am never to see them again!

CHAPTER III.

ON BOARD THE TYPHOON.

I do not remember much about the voyage to Boston, for after the first few hours at sea I was dreadfully unwell.

The name of our ship was the "A No. 1, fast-sailing packet Typhoon." I learned afterwards that she sailed fast only in the newspaper advertisements. My father owned one quarter of the Typhoon, and that is why we happened to go in her. I tried to guess which quarter of the ship he owned, and finally concluded it must be the hind quarter,—the cabin, in which we had the cosiest of state-rooms, with one round window in the roof, and two shelves or boxes nailed up against the wall to sleep in.

There was a good deal of confusion on deck while we were getting under way. The captain shouted orders (to which nobody seemed to pay any attention) through a battered tin trumpet, and grew so red in the face that he reminded me of a scooped-out pumpkin with a lighted candle inside. He swore right and left at the sailors without the slightest regard for their feelings. They didn't mind it a bit, however, but went on singing,—

"Heave ho!
With the rum below,
And hurrah for the Spanish Main O!"

I will not be positive about "the Spanish Main," but it was hurrah for something O. I considered them very jolly fellows, and so indeed they were. One weather-beaten tar in particular struck my fancy,—a thick-set, jovial man about fifty years of age, with twinkling blue eyes and a fringe of grey hair circling his head like a crown. As he took off his tarpaulin I observed that the top of his head was quite smooth and flat, as if somebody had sat down on him when he was very young.

There was something noticeably hearty in this man's bronzed face, a heartiness that seemed to extend to his loosely knotted neckerchief. But what completely won my good-will was a picture of enviable loveliness painted on his left arm. It was the head of a woman with the body of a fish. Her flowing hair was of livid green, and she held a pink comb in one hand. I never saw anything so beautiful. I determined to know that man. I think I would have given my brass pistol to have had such a picture painted on my arm.

While I stood admiring this work of art, a fat wheezy steam-tug, with the word AJAX in staring black letters on the paddle-box, came puffing up alongside the Typhoon. It was ridiculously small and conceited, compared with our stately ship. I specu-

lated as to what it was going to do. In a few minutes we were lashed to the little monster, which gave a snort and a shriek, and commenced backing us out from the levee (wharf) with the greatest ease.

I once saw an ant running away with a piece of cheese eight or ten times larger than itself. I could not help thinking of it, when I found the chubby, smoky-nosed tug-boat towing the Typhoon out into the Mississippi River.

In the middle of the stream we swung round, the current caught us, and away we flew like a great winged bird. Only it didn't seem as if *we* were moving. The shore, with the countless steamboats, the tangled rigging of the ships, and the long lines of warehouses, appeared to be gliding away from us.

It was grand sport to stand on the quarter-deck and watch all this. Before long there was nothing to be seen on either side but stretches of low swampy land, covered with stunted cypress-trees, from which drooped delicate streamers of Spanish moss,—a fine place for alligators and congo snakes. Here and there we passed a yellow sand-bar, and here and there a snag lifted its nose out of the water like a shark.

"This is your last chance to see the city, Tom," said my father, as we swept round a bend of the river.

I turned and looked. New Orleans was just a colorless mass of something in the distance, and the dome of the St. Charles Hotel, upon which the sun shimmered for a moment, was no bigger than the top of old Aunt Chloe's tumbler.

What do I remember next? the gray sky and the fretful blue waters of the Gulf. The steam-tug had long since let slip her hawsers and gone panting away with a derisive scream, as much as to say, "I've done my duty, now look out for yourself, old Typhoon!"

The ship seemed quite proud of being left to take care of itself, and, with its huge white sails bulged out, strutted off like a vain turkey. I had been standing by my father near the wheel-house all this while, observing things with that nicety of perception which belongs only to children; but now the dew began falling, and we went below to have supper.

The fresh fruit and milk, and the slices of cold chicken, looked very nice; yet somehow I had no appetite. There was a general smell of tar about everything. Then the ship gave sudden lurches that made it a matter of uncertainty whether one was going to put his fork to his mouth or into his eye. The tumblers and wineglasses, stuck in a rack over the table, kept clink-

ing and clinking; and the cabin lamp, suspended by four gilt chains from the ceiling, swayed to and fro crazily. Now the floor seemed to rise, and now it seemed to sink under one's feet like a feather-bed.

There were not more than a dozen passengers on board, including ourselves; and all of these, excepting a bald-headed old gentleman,—a retired sea captain,—disappeared into their state-rooms at an early hour of the evening.

After supper was cleared away, my father and the elderly gentleman, whose name was Captain Truck, played at checkers; and I amused myself for a while by watching the trouble they had in keeping the men in the proper places. Just at the most exciting point of the game, the ship would careen, and down would go the white checkers pell-mell among the black. Then my father laughed, but Captain Truck would grow very angry, and vow that he would have won the game in a move or two more, if the confounded old chicken-coop—that's what he called the ship—hadn't lurched.

"I—I think I will go to bed now, please," I said, laying my hand on my father's knee, and feeling exceedingly queer.

It was high time, for the Typhoon was plunging about in the most alarming fashion. I was speedily tucked away in the upper berth, where I felt a trifle more easy at first. My clothes were placed on a narrow shelf at my feet, and it was a great comfort to me to know that my pistol was so handy, for I made no doubt we should fall in with Pirates before many hours. This is the last thing I remember with any distinctness. At midnight, as I was afterwards told, we were struck by a gale which never left us until we came in sight of the Massachusetts coast.

For days and days I had no sensible idea of what was going on around me. That we were being hurled somewhere upside-down, and that I didn't like it, was about all I knew. I have, indeed, a vague impression that my father used to climb up to the berth and call me his "Ancient Mariner," bidding me cheer up. But the Ancient Mariner was far from cheering up, if I recollect rightly; and I don't believe that venerable navigator would have cared much if it had been announced to him, through a speaking-trumpet, that "a low, black, suspicious craft, with raking masts, was rapidly bearing down upon us!"

In fact, one morning, I thought that such was the case, for bang! went the big cannon I had noticed in the bow of the ship when we came on board, and which had suggested to me the idea of pirates. Bang! went the gun again in a few seconds. I made a feeble effort to get at my trousers-pocket;

But the Typhoon was only saluting Cape Cod,—the first land sighted by vessels approaching the coast from a southerly direction.

The vessel had ceased to roll, and my seasickness passed away as rapidly as it came. I was all right now, "only a little shaky in my timbers and a little blue about the gills," as Captain Truck remarked to my mother, who, like myself, had been confined to the state-room during the passage.

At Cape Cod the wind parted company with us without saying as much as "Excuse me;" so we were nearly two days in making the run which in favorable weather is usually accomplished in seven hours. That's what the pilot said.

I was able to go about the ship now, and I lost no time in cultivating the acquaintance of the sailor with the green-haired lady on his arm. I found him in the forecabin,—a sort of cellar in the front part of the vessel. He was an agreeable sailor, as I had expected, and we became the best of friends in five minutes.

He had been all over the world two or three times, and knew no end of stories. According to his own account, he must have been shipwrecked at least twice a year ever since his birth. He had served under Decatur when that gallant officer peppered the Algerines and made them promise not to sell their prisoners of war into slavery; he had worked a gun at the bombardment of Vera Cruz in the Mexican War, and he had been on Alexander Selkirk's Island more than once. There were very few things he hadn't done in a seafaring way.

"I suppose, sir," I remarked, "that *your* name isn't Typhoon?"

"Why, Lord love ye, lad, my name's Benjamin Watson, of Nantucket. But I'm a true blue Typhooner," he added, which increased my respect for him; I don't know why, and I didn't know then whether Typhoon was the name of a vegetable or a profession.

Not wishing to be outdone in frankness, I disclosed to him that *my* name was Tom Bailey, upon which he said he was very glad to hear it.

When we got more intimate, I discovered that Sailor Ben, as he wished me to call him, was a perfect walking picture-book. He had two anchors, a star, and a frigate in full sail on his right arm; a pair of lovely blue hands clasped on his breast, and I've no doubt that other parts of his body were illustrated in the same agreeable manner. I imagine he was fond of drawings, and took this means of gratifying his artistic taste. It was certainly very ingenious and convenient. A portfolio might be misplaced, or dropped

overboard; but Sailor Ben had his pictures wherever he went, just as that eminent person in the poem

"With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes"—

was accompanied by music on all occasions.

The two hands on his breast, he informed me, were a tribute to the memory of a dead messmate from whom he had parted years ago,—and surely a more touching tribute was never engraved on a tombstone. This caused me to think of my parting with old Aunt Chloe, and I told him I should take it as a great favor indeed if he would paint a pink hand and a black hand on my chest. He said the colors were pricked into the skin with needles, and that the operation was somewhat painful. I assured him in an off-hand manner, that I didn't mind pain, and begged him to set to work at once.

The simple-hearted fellow, who was probably not a little vain of his skill, took me into the forecabin, and was on the point of complying with my request, when my father happened to look down the gangway,—a circumstance that rather interfered with the decorative art.

I didn't have another opportunity of conferring alone with Sailor Ben, for the next morning, bright and early, we came in sight of the cupola of the Boston State House.

CHAPTER IV.

RIVERMOUTH.

It was a beautiful May morning when the Typhoon hauled up at Long Wharf. Whether the Indians were not early risers, or whether they were away just then on the war-path, I couldn't determine; but they did not appear in any great force,—in fact, did not appear at all.

In the remarkable geography which I never hurt myself with studying at New Orleans, was a picture representing the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, at Plymouth. The Pilgrim Fathers, in rather odd hats and coats, are seen approaching the savages; the savages, in no coats or hats to speak of, are evidently undecided whether to shake hands with the Pilgrim Fathers or to make one grand rush and scalp the entire party. Now this scene had so stamped itself on my mind, that, in spite of all my father had said, I was prepared for some such greeting from the aborigines. Nevertheless, I was not sorry to have my expectations unfulfilled. By the way, speaking of the Pilgrim Fathers, I often used to wonder why there was no mention made of the Pilgrim Mothers.

While our trunks were being hoisted from the hold of the ship, I mounted on the roof of the cabin, and took a critical view of Boston. As we came up the harbor, I had noticed that the houses were huddled together on an immense hill, at the top of which was a large building, the State House, towering proudly above the rest, like an amiable mother-hen surrounded by her brood of many-colored chickens. A closer inspection did not impress me very favorably. The city was not nearly so imposing as New Orleans, which stretches out for miles and miles, in the shape of a crescent, along the banks of the majestic river.

I soon grew tired of looking at the masses of houses, rising above one another in irregular tiers, and was glad my father did not propose to remain long in Boston. As I leaned over the rail in this mood, a measly-looking little boy with no shoes said that if I would come down on the wharf he'd lick me for two cents,—not an exorbitant price. But I did n't go down. I climbed into the rigging, and stared at him. This, as I was rejoiced to observe, so exasperated him that he stood on his head on a pile of boards, in order to pacify himself.

The first train for Rivermouth left at noon. After a late breakfast on board the Typhoon, our trunks were piled upon a baggage-wagon, and ourselves stowed away in a coach, which must have turned at least one hundred corners before it set us down at the railway station.

In less time than it takes to tell it, we were shooting across the country at a fearful rate,—now clattering over a bridge, now screaming through a tunnel; here we cut a flourishing village in two, like a knife, and here we divided into the shadow of a pine-forest. Sometimes we glided along the edge of the ocean, and could see the sails of ships twinkling like bits of silver against the horizon; sometimes we dashed across rocky pasture-lands where stupid-eyed cattle were loafing. It was fun to scare the lazy-looking cows that lay round in groups under the newly budded trees near the railroad track.

We did not pause at any of the little brown stations on the route (they looked just like overgrown black-walnut clocks), though at every one of them a man popped out as if he were worked by machinery, and waved a red flag, and appeared as though he would like to have us stop. But we were an express train, and made no stoppages, excepting once or twice to give the engine a drink.

It is strange how the memory clings to some things. It is over twenty years since I took that first ride to Rivermouth, and yet, oddly enough, I remember as if it were

yesterday, that, as we passed slowly through the village of Hampton, we saw two boys fighting behind a red barn. There was also a shaggy yellow dog, who looked as if he had commenced to unravel, barking himself all up into a knot with excitement. We had only a hurried glimpse of the battle,—long enough, however, to see that the combatants were equally matched and very much in earnest. I am ashamed to say how many times since I have speculated as to which boy got licked. Maybe both the small rascals are dead now (not in consequence of the set-to, let us hope), or maybe they are married, and have pugnacious urchins of their own; yet to this day I sometimes find myself wondering how that fight turned out.

We had been riding perhaps two hours and a half, when we shot by a tall factory with a chimney resembling a church-steeple; then the locomotive gave a scream, the engineer rang his bell, and we plunged into the twilight of a long wooden building, open at both ends. Here we stopped, and the conductor, thrusting his head in at the car door, cried out, "Passengers for Rivermouth!"

At last we had reached our journey's end. On the platform my father shook hands with a straight, brisk old gentleman whose face was very serene and rosy. He had on a white hat and a long swallow-tailed coat, the collar of which came clear up above his ears. He didn't look unlike a Pilgrim Father. This, of course, was Grandfather Nutter, at whose house I was born. My mother kissed him a great many times; and I was glad to see him myself, though I naturally did not feel very intimate with a person whom I had not seen since I was eighteen months old.

While we were getting into the double-seated wagon which Grandfather Nutter had provided, I took the opportunity of asking after the health of the pony. The pony had arrived all right ten days before, and was in the stable at home, quite anxious to see me.

As we drove through the quiet old town, I thought Rivermouth the prettiest place in the world; and I think so still. The streets are long and wide, shaded by gigantic American elms, whose drooping branches, interlacing here and there, span the avenues with arches graceful enough to be the handiwork of fairies. Many of the houses have small flower-gardens in front, gay in the season with china-asters, and are substantially built, with massive chimney-stacks and protruding eaves. A beautiful river goes rippling by the town, and, after turning and twisting among islands, empties into the sea.

The harbor is so fine that the largest ships can sail directly up to the wharves and drop anchor. Only they don't. Years ago it was a famous seaport. Princely fortunes were made in the West India trade; and in 1812, when we were at war with Great Britain, any number of privateers were fitted out at Rivermouth to prey upon the merchant vessels of the enemy. Certain people grew suddenly and mysteriously rich. A great many of "the first families" of to-day do not care to trace their pedigree back to the time when their grandsires owned shares in the Matilda Jane, twenty-four guns. Well, well!

Few ships come to Rivermouth now. Commerce drifted into other ports. The phantom fleet sailed off one day, and never came back again. The crazy old warehouses are empty; and barnacles and eelgrass cling to the piles of the crumbling wharves, where the sunshine lies lovingly, bringing out the faint spicy odor that haunts the place,—the ghost of the old dead West India trade!

During our ride from the station, I was struck, of course, only by the general neatness of the houses and the beauty of the elm-trees lining the streets. I describe Rivermouth now as I came to know it afterwards.

Rivermouth is a very ancient town. In my day there existed a tradition among the boys that it was here Christopher Columbus made his first landing on this continent. I remember having the exact spot pointed out to me by Pepper Whitcomb! One thing is certain, Captain John Smith, who afterwards, according to the legend, married Pocahontas,—whereby he got Powhatan for a father-in-law,—explored the river in 1614, and was much charmed by the beauty of Rivermouth, which at that time was covered with wild strawberry-vines.

Rivermouth figures prominently in all the colonial histories. Every other house in the place has its tradition more or less grim and entertaining. If ghosts could flourish anywhere, there are certain streets in Rivermouth that would be full of them. I don't know of a town with so many old houses. Let us linger, for a moment, in front of the one which the Oldest Inhabitant is always sure to point out to the curious stranger.

It is a square wooden edifice, with gambrel roof and deep-set window-frames. Over the windows and doors there used to be heavy carvings,—oak-leaves and acorns, and angels' heads with wings spreading from the ears, oddly jumbled together; but these ornaments and other outward signs of grandeur have long since disappeared. A

peculiar interest attaches itself to this house, not because of its age, for it has not been standing quite a century; nor on account of its architecture, which is not striking,—but because of the illustrious men who at various periods have occupied its spacious chambers.

In 1770 it was an aristocratic hotel. At the left side of the entrance stood a high post, from which swung the sign of the Earl of Halifax. The landlord was a staunch loyalist,—that is to say, he believed in the king, and when the overtaxed colonies determined to throw off the British yoke, the adherents to the Crown held private meetings in one of the back rooms of the tavern. This irritated the rebels, as they were called; and one night they made an attack on the Earl of Halifax, tore down the sign-board, broke in the window-sashes, and gave the landlord hardly time to make himself invisible over a fence in the rear.

For several months the shattered tavern remained deserted. At last the exiled innkeeper, on promising to do better, was allowed to return; a new sign, bearing the name of William Pitt, the friend of America, swung proudly from the door-post, and the patriots were appeased. Here it was that the mail-coach from Boston twice a week, for many a year, set down its load of travellers and gossip. For some of the details in this sketch, I am indebted to a recently published chronicle of those times.

It is 1782. The French fleet is lying in the harbor of Rivermouth, and eight of the principal officers, in white uniforms trimmed with gold lace, have taken up their quarters at the sign of the William Pitt. Who is this young and handsome officer now entering the door of the tavern? It is no less a personage than the Marquis Lafayette, who has come all the way from Providence to visit the French gentlemen boarding there. What a gallant-looking cavalier he is, with his quick eyes and coal-black hair! Forty years later he visited the spot again; his locks were gray and his step was feeble, but his heart held its young love for Liberty.

Who is this finely dressed traveller alighting from his coach and four, attended by servants in livery? Do you know that sounding name, written in big valorous letters on the Declaration of Independence,—written as if by the hand of a giant? Can you not see it now?—JOHN HANCOCK. This is he.

Three young men, with their *valet*, are standing on the door-step of the William Pitt, bowing politely, and inquiring in the most courteous terms in the world if they can be accommodated. It is the time of

the French Revolution, and these are three sons of the Duke of Orleans.—Louis Philippe and his two brothers. Louis Philippe never forgot his visit to Rivermouth. Years afterwards, when he was seated on the throne of France, he asked an American lady, who chanced to be at his court, if the pleasant old mansion were still standing.

But a greater and a better man than the king of the French has honored this roof. Here, in 1789, came George Washington, the President of the United States, to pay his final complimentary visit to the State dignitaries. The wainscoted chamber where he slept, and the dining-hall where he entertained his guests, have a certain dignity and sanctity which even the present Irish tenants cannot wholly destroy.

During the period of my reign at Rivermouth, an ancient lady, Dame Jocelyn by name, lived in one of the upper rooms of this notable building. She was a dashing young belle at the time of Washington's first visit to the town, and must have been exceedingly coquettish and petty, judging from a certain portrait on ivory still in the possession of the family. According to Dame Jocelyn, George Washington flirted with her just a little bit,—in what a stately and highly finished manner can be imagined.

There was a mirror with a deep filigreed frame hanging over the mantle-piece in this room. The glass was cracked and the quicksilver rubbed off or discolored in many places. When it reflected your face you had the singular pleasure of not recognizing yourself. It gave your features the appearance of having been run through a mince-meat machine. But what rendered the looking-glass a thing of enchantment to me was a faded green feather, tipped with scarlet, which drooped from the top of the tarnished gilt mouldings. This feather Washington took from the plume of his three-cornered hat, and presented with his own hand to the worshipful Mistress Jocelyn the day he left Rivermouth forever. I wish I could describe the mincing genteel air, and the ill-concealed self-complacency, with which the dear old lady related the incident.

Many a Saturday afternoon have I climbed up the rickety staircase to that dingy room, which always had a flavor of snuff about it, to sit on a stiff-backed chair and listen for hours together to Dame Jocelyn's stories of the olden time. How she would prattle! She was bedridden,—poor creature!—and had not been out of the chamber for fourteen years. Meanwhile the world had shot ahead of Dame Jocelyn. The changes that had taken place under

her very nose were unknown to this faded, crooning old gentlewoman, whom the eighteenth century had neglected to take away with the rest of its old traps. She had no patience with new-fangled notions. The old ways and the old times were good enough for her. She had never seen a steam-engine, though she had heard "the dratted thing" screech in the distance. In *her* day, when gentlefolk travelled, they went in their own coaches. She didn't see how respectable people could bring themselves down to "riding in a car with rag-tag and bobtail and Lord-knows-who." Poor old aristocrat! the landlord charged her no rent for the room, and the neighbors took turns in supplying her with meals. Towards the close of her life,—she lived to be ninety-nine,—she grew very fretful and capricious about her food. If she didn't chance to fancy what was sent her, she had no hesitation in sending it back to the giver with "Miss Jocelyn's respectful compliments."

But I have been gossiping too long,—and yet not too long if I have impressed upon the reader an idea of what a rusty, delightful old town it was to which I had come to spend the next three or four years of my boyhood.

A drive of twenty minutes from the station brought us to the door-step of Grandfather Nutter's house. What kind of house it was, and what sort of people lived in it, shall be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE NUTTER HOUSE AND THE NUTTER FAMILY.

The Nutter House,—all the more prominent dwellings in Rivermouth are named after somebody; for instance, there is the Walford House, the Venner House, the Trefethen House, etc., though it by no means follows that they are inhabited by the people whose names they bear,—the Nutter House, to resume, has been in our family nearly a hundred years, and is an honor to the builder (an ancestor of ours, I believe), supposing durability to be a merit. If our ancestor *was* a carpenter, he knew his trade. I wish I knew mine as well. Such timber and such workmanship don't often come together in houses built nowadays.

Imagine a low-studded structure, with a wide nail running through the middle. At your right hand, as you enter, stands a tall black mahogany clock, looking like an Egyptian mummy set up on end. On each side of the hall are doors (whose knobs, it must be confessed, do not turn very easily),

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opening into large rooms wainscoted and rich in wood-carvings about the mantel-pieces and cornices. The walls are covered with pictured paper, representing landscapes and sea-views. In the parlor, for example, this enlivening figure is repeated all over the room;—A group of English peasants, wearing Italian hats, are dancing on a lawn that abruptly resolves itself into a sea-beach, upon which stands a flabby fisherman (nationality unknown), quietly hauling in what appears to be a small whale, and totally regardless of the dreadful naval combat going on just beyond the end of his fishing-rod. On the other side of the ships is the main-land again, with the same peasants dancing. Our ancestors were very worthy people, but their wall-papers were abominable.

There are neither grates nor stoves in these quaint chambers, but splendid open chimneys-places, with room enough for the corpulent back-log to turn over comfortably on the polished andirons. A wide stair-case leads from the hall to the second story, which is arranged much like the first. Over this is the garret. I needn't tell a New England boy what a museum of curiosities is the garret of a well-regulated New England house of fifty or sixty years' standing. Here meet together, as if by some preconcerted arrangement, all the broken-down chairs of the household, all the spavined tables, all the seedy hats, all the intoxicated-looking boots, all the split walking-sticks that have retired from business, "weary with the march of life." The pots, the pans, the trunks, the bottles,—who may hope to make an inventory of the numberless odds and ends collected in this bewildered lumber-room? But what a place it is to sit of an afternoon with the rain pattering on the roof! what a place in which to read Gullivers Travels, or the famous adventures of Rinaldo Rinaldini!

My grandfather's house stood a little back from the main street, in the shadow of two handsome elms, whose overgrown boughs would dash themselves against the gables whenever the wind blew hard. In the rear was a pleasant garden, covering perhaps a quarter of an acre, full of plum-trees and gooseberry-bushes. These trees were old settlers, and are all dead now, excepting one, which bears a purple plum as big as an egg. This tree, as I remark, is still standing, and a more beautiful tree to tumble out of never grew anywhere. In the north-western corner of the garden were the stables and carriage-house opening upon a narrow lane. You may imagine that I made an early visit to that locality to inspect Gipsy. Indeed, I paid her a visit every half-hour during the

first day of my arrival. At the twenty-fourth visit she trod on my foot rather heavily, as a reminder, probably, that I was wearing out my welcome. She was a knowing little pony, that Gipsy, and I shall have much to say of her in the course of these pages.

Gipsy's quarters were all that could be wished, but nothing among my new surroundings gave me more satisfaction than the cosey sleeping apartment that had been prepared for myself. It was the hall room over the front door.

I had never had a chamber all to myself before, and this one, about twice the size of our state-room on board the Typhoon, was a marvel of neatness and comfort. Pretty chintz curtains hung at the windows, and a patch quilt of more colors than were in Joseph's coat covered the little truckle-bed. The pattern of the wall-paper left nothing to be desired in that line. On a gray background were small bunches of leaves, unlike any that ever grew in this world; and on every other bunch perched a yellow bird, pitted with crimson spots, as if it had just recovered from a severe attack of small-pox. That no such bird ever existed did not detract from my admiration of each one. There were two hundred and sixty-eight of these birds in all, not counting those split in two where the paper was badly joined. I counted them once when I was laid up with a fine black eye, and falling asleep immediately dreamed that the whole flock suddenly took wing and flew out of the window. From that time I was never able to regard them as merely inanimate objects.

A wash-stand in the corner, a chest of carved mahogany drawers, a looking-glass in a filligreed frame, and a high-backed chair studded with brass nails like a coffin, constituted the furniture. Over the head of the bed were two oak shelves, holding perhaps a dozen books,—among which were Theodore, or the Peruvians; Robinson Crusoe; an odd volume of Tristram Shandy; Baxter's Saints' Rest, and a fine English edition of the Arabian Nights, with six hundred woodcuts by Harvey.

Shall I ever forget the hour when I first overhauled these books? I do not allude especially to Baxter's Saints' Rest, which is far from being a lively work for the young, but to the Arabian Nights, and particularly Robinson Crusoe. The thrill that ran into my fingers' ends then has not run out yet. Many a time did I steal up to this nest of a room, and, taking the dog-eared volume from its shelf, glide off into an enchanted realm, where there were no lessons to get and no boys to smash my kite. In a lidless trunk in the garret I subsequently unearthed

another motley collection of novels and romances, embracing the adventures of Baron Trenck, Jack Sheppard, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Charlotte Temple,—all of which I fed upon like a bookworm.

I never came across a copy of any of those works without feeling a certain tenderness for the yellow haired little rascal who used to lean above the magic pages hour after hour, religiously believing every word he read, and no more doubting the reality of Sindbad the Sailor, or the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance, than he did the existence of his own grandfather.

Against the wall at the foot of the bed hung a single-barrel shot-gun,—placed there by Grandfather Nutter, who knew what a boy loved, if ever a grandfather did. As the trigger of the gun had been accidentally twisted off, it was not, perhaps, the most dangerous weapon that could be placed in the hands of youth. In this maimed condition its "bump of destructiveness" was much less than that of my small brass pocket-pistol, which I at once proceeded to suspend from one of the nails supporting the fowling-piece, for my vagaries concerning the red man had been entirely dispelled.

Having introduced the reader to the Nutter House, a presentation to the Nutter family naturally follows. The family consists of my grandfather; his sister, Miss Abigail Nutter; Kitty Collins, the maid-of-all-work.

Grandfather Nutter was a hale, cheery old gentleman, as straight and as bald as an arrow. He had been a sailor in early life; that is to say, at the age of ten years he fled from the multiplication-table, and ran away away to sea. A single voyage satisfied him. There never was but one of our family who *didn't* run away to sea, and this one died at his birth. My grandfather had also been a soldier,—a captain of militia in 1812. If I owe the British nation anything, I owe thanks to that particular British soldier who put a musket-ball into the fleshy part of Captain Nutter's leg, causing that noble warrior a slight permanent limp, but offsetting the injury by furnishing him with the material for a story which the old gentleman was never weary of telling and I never weary of listening to. The story, in brief, was as follows.

At the breaking out of the war, an English frigate lay for several days off the coast near Rivermouth. A strong fort defended the harbor, and a regiment of minute-men, scattered at various points along-shore, stood ready to repel the boats, should the enemy try to effect a landing. Captain Nutter had charge of a slight earthwork just outside the mouth of the river. Late one

thick night the sound of oars was heard; the sentinel tried to fire off his gun at half-cock, and couldn't, when Captain Nutter sprung upon the parapet in the pitch darkness, and shouted, "Boat Ahoy!" A musket-shot immediately embedded itself in the calf of his leg. The Captain tumbled into the fort and the boat, which had probably come in search of water, pulled back to the frigate.

This was my grandfather's only exploit during the war. That his prompt and bold conduct was instrumental in teaching the enemy the hopelessness of attempting to conquer such a people was among the firm beliefs of my boyhood.

At the time I came to Rivermouth my grandfather had retired from active pursuits, and was living at ease on his money, invested principally in shipping. He had been a widower many years; a maiden sister, the aforesaid Miss Abigail, managing his household. Miss Abigail also managed her brother, and her brother's servant, and the visitor at her brother's gate,—not in a tyrannical spirit, but from a philanthropic desire to be useful to everybody. In person she was tall and angular; she had a gray complexion gray eyes, gray eyebrows, and generally wore a gray dress. Her strongest weak point was a belief in the efficacy of "hot-drops" as a cure for all known diseases.

If there were ever two people who seemed to dislike each other, Miss Abigail and Kitty Collins were those people. If ever two people really loved each other, Miss Abigail and Kitty Collins were those people also. They were always either skirmishing or having a cup of tea lovingly together.

Miss Abigail was very fond of me, and so was Kitty; and in the course of their disagreements each let me into the private history of the other.

According to Kitty, it was not originally my grandfather's intention to have Miss Abigail at the head of his domestic establishment. She had swooped down on him (Kitty's own words), with a band-box in one hand and a faded blue cotton umbrella, still in existence, in the other. Clad in this singular garb,—I do not remember that Kitty alluded to any additional peculiarity of her dress,—Miss Abigail had made her appearance at the door of the Nutter House on the morning of my grandmother's funeral. The small amount of baggage which the lady brought with her would have led the superficial observer to infer that Miss Abigail's visit was limited to a few days. I run ahead of my story in saying she remained seventeen years! How much longer she would have remained can never be definitely known now, as she died

at the expiration of that period.

Whether or not my grandfather was quite pleased by this unlooked-for addition to his family is a problem. He was very kind always to Miss Abigail, and seldom opposed her; though I think she must have tried his patience sometimes, especially when she interfered with Kitty.

Kitty Collins, or Mrs. Catherine, as she preferred to be called, was descended in a direct line from an extensive family of kings who formerly ruled over Ireland. In consequence of various calamities, among which the failure of the potato-crop may be mentioned, Miss Kitty Collins, in company with several hundred of her countrymen and countrywomen,—also descended from kings,—came over to America in an emigrant ship, in the year eighteen hundred and something.

I don't know what freak of fortune caused the royal exile to turn up at Rivermouth; but turn up she did, a few months after arriving in this country, and was hired by my grandmother to do "general house-work" for the sum of four shillings and sixpence a week.

Kitty had been living about seven years in my grandfather's family when she unburdened her heart of a secret which had been weighing upon it all that time. It may be said of people, as it is said of nations, "Happy are they that have no history." Kitty had a history, and a pathetic one, I think.

On board the emigrant ship that brought her to America, she became acquainted with a sailor, who, being touched by Kitty's forlorn condition, was very good to her. Long before the end of the voyage, which had been tedious and perilous, she was heart-broken at the thought of separating from her kindly protector; but they were not to part just yet, for the sailor returned Kitty's affection, and the two were married on their arrival at port. Kitty's husband—she would never mention his name, but kept it locked in her bosom like some precious relic—had a considerable sum of money when the crew were paid off; and the young couple—for Kitty was young then—lived very happily in a lodging-house on South Street, near the docks. This was in New York.

The days flew by like hours, and the stocking in which the little bride kept the funds shrunk and shrunk, until at last there were only three or four dollars left in the toe of it. Then Kitty was troubled; for she knew her sailor would have to go to sea again unless he could get employment on shore. This he endeavored to do, but not with much success. One morning as usual

he kissed her good day, and set out in search of work.

"Kissed me good by, and called me his little Irish lass, sobbed Kitty, telling the story,—“kissed me good by, and, Heaven help me! I never set oi on him nor on the likes of him again.”

He never came back. Day after day dragged on, night after night, and then the weary weeks. What had become of him? Had he been murdered? had he fallen into the docks? had he—*deserted her*? No! she could not believe that; he was too brave and tender and true. She could n't believe that. He was dead, dead, or he'd come back to her.

Meanwhile the landlord of the lodging-house turned Kitty into the streets, now that "her man" was gone, and the payment of the rent doubtful. She got a place as a servant. The family she lived with shortly moved to Boston, and she accompanied them; then they went abroad, but Kitty would not leave America. Somehow she drifted to Rivermouth, and for seven long years never gave speech to her sorrow, until the kindness of strangers, who had become friends to her, unsealed the heroic lips.

Kitty's story, you may be sure, made my grand-parents treat her more kindly than ever. In time as she grew to be regarded less as a servant than a friend in the home circle, sharing its joys and sorrows,—a faithful nurse, a willing slave, a happy spirit in spite of all. I fancy I hear her singing over her work in the kitchen, pausing from time to time to make some witty reply to Miss Abigail,—for Kitty, like all her race, had a vein of unconscious humor. Her bright honest face comes to me out from the past, the light and life of the Nutter House when I was a boy at Rivermouth.

CHAPTER VI.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

The first shadow that fell upon me in my new home was caused by the return of my parents to New Orleans. Their visit was cut short by business which required my father's presence in Natchez, where he was establishing a branch of the banking-house. When they had gone, a sense of loneliness such as I had never dreamed of filled my young breast. I crept away to the stable, and, throwing my arms about Gypsy's neck, sobbed aloud. She too had come from the sunny South, and was now a stranger in a strange land.

The little mare seemed to realize our situation, and gave me all the sympathy I could ask, repeatedly rubbing her soft nose

over my face and lapping up my salt tears with evident relish.

When night came, I felt still more lonesome. My grandfather sat in his arm-chair the greater part of the evening, reading the Rivermouth Barnacle, the local newspaper. There was no gas in those days, and the Captain read by the aid of a small block-tin lamp, which he held in one hand. I observed that he had a habit of dropping off into a doze every three or four minutes, and I forgot my homesickness at intervals in watching him. Two or three times, to my vast amusement, he scorched the edges of the newspaper with the wick of the lamp; and at about half past eight o'clock I had the satisfaction—I am sorry to confess it was a satisfaction—of seeing the Rivermouth Barnacle in flames.

My grandfather leisurely extinguished the fire with his hands, and Miss Abigail, who sat near a low table, knitting by the light of an astral lamp, did not even look up. She was quite used to this catastrophe.

There was little or no conversation during the evening. In fact, I do not remember that any one spoke at all, excepting once, when the Captain remarked, in a meditative manner, that my parents "must have reached New York by this time;" at which supposition I nearly strangled myself in attempting to intercept a sob.

The monotonous "click click" of Miss Abigail's needles made me nervous after a while, and finally drove me out of the sitting-room into the kitchen, where Kitty caused me to laugh by saying Miss Abigail thought that what I needed was "a good dose of hot-drops,"—a remedy she was forever ready to administer in all emergencies. If a boy broke his leg, or lost his mother, I believe Miss Abigail would have given him hot-drops.

Kitty laid herself out to be entertaining. She told me several funny Irish stories, and described some of the odd people living in the town; but, in the midst of her comicalities, the tears would involuntarily ooze out of my eyes, though I was not a lad much addicted to weeping. Then Kitty would put her arms around me, and tell me not to mind it,—that it wasn't as if I had been left alone in a foreign land with no one to care for me, like a poor girl whom she had once known. I brightened up before long, and told Kitty all about the Typhoon and the old seaman, whose name I tried in vain to recall, and was obliged to fall back on plain Sailor Ben.

I was glad when ten o'clock came, the bedtime for young folks, and old folks too, at the Nutter House. Alone in the hall-chamber I had my cry out, once for all,

moistening the pillow to such an extent that I was obliged to turn it over to find a dry spot to go to sleep on.

My grandfather wisely concluded to put me to school at once. If I had been permitted to go mooning about the house and stables, I should have kept my discontent alive for months. The next morning, accordingly, he took me by the hand, and we set forth for the academy, which was located at the farther end of the town.

The Temple School was a two-story brick building, standing in the centre of a great square piece of land, surrounded by a high picket fence. There were three or four sickly trees, but no grass, in this enclosure, which had been worn smooth and hard by the tread of multitudinous feet. I noticed here and there small holes scooped in the ground, indicating that it was the season for marbles. A better playground for base-ball couldn't have been devised.

On reaching the school-house door, the Captain inquired for Mr. Grimshaw. The boy who answered our knock ushered us into a side-room, and in a few minutes—during which my eye took in forty-two caps hung on forty-two wooden pegs—Mr. Grimshaw made his appearance. He was a slender man, with white, fragile hands, and eyes that glanced half a dozen different ways at once,—a habit probably acquired from watching the boys.

After a brief consultation, my grandfather patted me on the head and left me in charge of this gentleman, who seated himself in front of me and proceeded to sound the depth, or, more properly speaking, the shallowness, of my attainments. I suspect my historical information rather startled him. I recollect I gave him to understand that Richard III. was the last king of England.

This ordeal over, Mr. Grimshaw rose and bade me follow him. A door opened, and I stood in the blaze of forty-two pairs of up-turned eyes. I was a cool hand for my age, but I lacked the boldness to face this battery without wincing. In a sort of dazed way I stumbled after Mr. Grimshaw down a narrow aisle between two rows of desks, and shyly took the seat pointed out to me.

The faint buzz that had floated over the schoolroom at our entrance died away, and the interrupted lessons were resumed. By degrees I recovered my coolness, and ventured to look around me.

The owners of the forty-two caps were seated at small green desks like the one assigned to me. The desks were arranged in six rows, with spaces between just wide enough to prevent the boys' whispering. A blackboard set into the wall extended clear across the end of the room; on a raised

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platform near the door stood the master's table; and directly in front of this was a recitation-bench capable of seating fifteen or twenty pupils. A pair of globes, tattooed with dragons and winged horses, occupied a shelf between two windows, which were so high from the floor that nothing but a giraffe could have looked out of them.

Having possessed myself of these details, I scrutinized my new acquaintances with unconcealed curiosity, instinctively selecting my friends and picking out my enemies,—and in only two cases did I mistake my man.

A sallow boy with bright red hair, sitting in the fourth row, shook his fist at me furiously several times during the morning. I had a presentiment I should have trouble with that boy some day,—a presentiment subsequently realized.

On my left was a chubby little fellow with a great many freckles (this was Pepper Whitcomb), who made some mysterious motions to me. I didn't understand them, but, as they were clearly of a pacific nature, I winked my eye at him. This appeared to be satisfactory, for he then went on with his studies. At recess he gave me the core of his apple, though there were several applicants for it.

Presently a boy in a loose olive-green jacket with two rows of brass buttons held up a folded paper behind his slate, intimating that it was intended for me. The paper was passed skilfully from desk to desk until it reached my hands. On opening the scrap, I found that it contained a small piece of molasses candy in an extremely humid state. This was certainly kind. I nodded my acknowledgments and hastily slipped the delicacy into my mouth. In a second I felt my tongue grow red-hot with cayenne pepper.

My face must have assumed a comical expression, for the boy in the olive-green jacket gave an hysterical laugh, for which he was instantly punished by Mr. Grimshaw. I swallowed the fiery candy, though it brought the water to my eyes, and managed to look so unconcerned that I was the only pupil in the form who escaped questioning as to the cause of Marden's misdemeanor. C. Marden was his name.

Nothing else occurred that morning to interrupt the exercises, excepting that a boy in the reading class threw us all into convulsions by calling Absalom *A-bol-som*,—"Abolsom, O my son Abolsom!" I laughed as loud as any one, but I am not so sure that I shouldn't have pronounced it Abolsom myself.

At recess several of the scholars came to my desk and shook hands with me, Mr.

Grimshaw having previously introduced me to Phil Adams, charging him to see that I got into no trouble. My new acquaintances suggested that we should go to the playground. We were no sooner out of doors than the boy with the red hair thrust his way through the crowd and placed himself at my side.

"I say, youngster, if you're comin' to this school you've got to toe the mark."

I didn't see any mark to toe, and didn't understand what he meant; but I replied politely, that, if it was the custom of the school, I should be happy to toe the mark, if he would point it out to me.

"I don't want any of your sarse," said the boy, scowling.

"Look here, Conway!" cried a clear voice from the other side of the playground, "you let young Bailey alone. He's a stranger here, and might be afraid of you, and thrash you. Why do you always throw yourself in the way of getting thrashed?"

I turned to the speaker, who by this time had reached the spot where we stood. Conway slunk off, favoring me with a parting scowl of defiance. I gave my hand to the boy who had befriended me,—his name was Jack Harris,—and thanked him for his good-will.

"I tell you what it is, Bailey," he said, returning my pressure good-naturedly, "you'll have to fight Conway before the quarter ends, or you'll have no rest. That fellow is always hankering after a licking, and of course you'll give him one—and by; but what's the use of hurrying about an unpleasant job? Let's have some base-ball. By the way, Bailey, you were a good kid not to let on to Grimshaw about the candy. Charley Marden would have caught it twice as heavy. He's sorry he played the joke on you, and told me to tell you so. Hallo, Blake! where are the bats?"

This was addressed to a handsome, frank-looking lad of about my own age, who was engaged just then in cutting his initials on the bark of a tree near the school-house. Blake shut up his penknife and went off to get the bats.

During the game which ensued I made the acquaintance of Charley Marden, Binny Wallace, Pepper Whitcomb, Harry Blake, and Fred Langdon. These boys, none of them more than a year or two older than I (Binny Wallace was younger), were ever after my chosen comrades. Phil Adams and Jack Harris were considerably our seniors, and, though they always treated us "kids" very kindly, they generally went with another set. Of course, before long I knew all the Temple boys more or less intimately, but these I have named were my companions

My first day at the Temple Grammar School was on the whole satisfactory. I had made several warm friends and only two permanent enemies,—Conway and his echo, Seth Rodgers; for these two always went together like a deranged stomach and a headache.

Before the end of the week I had my studies well in hand. I was a little ashamed at finding myself at the foot of the various classes, and secretly determined to deserve promotion. The school was an admirable one. I might make this part of my story more entertaining by picturing Mr. Grimshaw as a tyrant with a red nose and a large stick; but unfortunately for the purposes of sensational narrative, Mr. Grimshaw was a quiet, kind-hearted gentleman. Though a rigid disciplinarian, he had a keen sense of justice, was a good reader of character, and the boys respected him. There were two other teachers,—a French tutor and a writing-master, who visited the school twice a week. On Wednesdays and Saturdays we were dismissed at noon, and these half-holidays were the brightest epochs of my existence.

Daily contact with boys who had not been brought up as gently as I worked an immediate, and, in some respects, a beneficial change in my character. I had the nonsense taken out of me, as the saying is,—some of the nonsense, at least. I became more manly and self-reliant. I discovered that the world was not created exclusively on my own account. In New Orleans I labored under the delusion that it was. Having neither brother nor sister to give up to at home, and being, moreover, the largest pupil at school there, my will had seldom been opposed. At Rivermouth matters were different, and I was not long in adapting myself to the altered circumstances. Of course I got many severe rubs, often unconsciously given; but I had the sense to see that I was all the better for them.

My social relations with my new school-fellows were the pleasantest possible. There was always some exciting excursion on foot,—a ramble through the pine woods, a visit to the Devil's Pulpit, a high cliff in the neighborhood,—or a surreptitious row on the river, involving an exploration of a group of diminutive islands, upon one of which we pitched a tent and played we were the Spanish sailors who got wrecked there years ago. But the endless pine forest that skirted the town was our favorite haunt. There was a great green pond hidden somewhere in its depths, inhabited by a monstrous colony of turtles. Harry Blake, who had an eccentric passion for carving his name on everything, never let

a captured turtle slip through his fingers without leaving his mark engraved on its shell. He must have lettere^d about two thousand from first to last. We used to call them Harry Blake's sheep.

These turtles were of a discontented and migratory turn of mind, and we frequently encountered two or three of them on the cross-roads several miles from their ancestral mud. Unspeakable was our delight whenever we discovered one soberly walking off with Harry Blake's initials! I've no doubt they are, at this moment, fat ancient turtles wandering about that gummy woodland with **H. B.** neatly cut on their venerable backs.

It soon became a custom among my playmates to make our barn their rendezvous. Gypsy proved a strong attraction. Captain Nutter bought me a little two-wheeled cart which she drew quiet nicely, after kicking out the dasher and breaking the shafts once or twice. With our lunch-baskets and fishing-tackle stowed away under the seat, we used to start off early in the afternoon for the sea-shore, where there were countless marvels in the shape of shells, mosses, and kelp. Gypsy enjoyed the sport as keenly as any of us, even going so far, one day, as to trot down the beach into the sea where we were bathing. As she took the cart with her, our provisions were not much improved. I shall never forget how squash-pie tastes after being soured in the Atlantic Ocean. Soda-crackers dipped in salt water are palatable, but not squash-pie.

There was a good deal of wet weather during those first six weeks at Rivermouth, and we set ourselves at work to find some in-door amusement for our half-holidays. It was all very well for Amadis de Gaul and Don Quixote not to mind the rain; they had iron overcoats, and were not, from all we can learn, subject to croup and the guidance of their grandfathers. Our case was different.

"Now, boys, what shall we do?" I asked, addressing a thoughtful conclave of seven, assembled in our barn one dismal rainy afternoon.

"Let's have a theatre," suggested Binny Wallace.

The very thing! But where? The loft of the stable was ready to burst with hay provided for Gypsy, but the long room over the carriage-house was unoccupied. The place of all places! My managerial eye saw at a glance its capabilities for a theatre. I had been to the play a great many times in New Orleans, and was wise in matters pertaining to the drama. So here, in due time, was set up some extraordinary scenery of my own painting. The curtain, I recollect,

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though it worked smoothly enough on other occasions, invariably hitched during the performances; and it often required the united energies of the Prince of Denmark, the King, and the Grave-digger, with an occasional hand from "the fair Ophelia" (Pepper Whitcomb in a low-necked dress), to hoist that bit of green cambric.

The theatre, however, was a success, as far as it went. I retired from the business with no fewer than fifteen hundred pins, after deducting the headless, the pointless and the crooked pins with which our door-keeper frequently got "stuck." From first to last we took in a great deal of this counterfeit money. The price of admission to the "Rivermouth Theatre" was twenty pins. I played all the principal parts myself,—not that I was a finer actor than the other boys, but because I owned the establishment.

At the tenth representation, my dramatic career was brought to a close by an unfortunate circumstance. We were playing the drama of "William Tell, the Hero of Switzerland." Of course I was William Tell, in spite of Fred Langdon, who wanted to act that character himself. I wouldn't let him, so he withdrew from the company, taking the only bow and arrow we had. I made a cross-bow out of a piece of whale-bone, and did very well without him. We had reached that exciting scene where Gessler, the Austrian tyrant, commands Tell to shoot the apple from his son's head. Pepper Whitcomb, who played all the juvenile and women parts, was my son. To guard against mischance, a piece of paste-board was fastened by a handkerchief over the upper portion of Whitcomb's face, while the arrow to be used was sowed up in a strip of flannel. I was a capital marksman, and the big apple, only two yards distant, turned its russet cheek fairly towards me.

I can see poor little Pepper now, as he stood without flinching, waiting for me to perform my great feat. I raised the cross-bow amid the breathless silence of the crowded audience,—consisting of seven boys and three girls, exclusive of Kitty Collins, who insisted on paying her way in with a clothes-pin. I raised the cross-bow, I repeat. Twang! went the whipcord; but, alas! instead of hitting the apple, the arrow flew right into Pepper Whitcomb's mouth, which happened to be open at the time, and destroyed my aim.

I never shall be able to banish that awful moment from my memory. Pepper's roar, expressive of astonishment, indignation, and pain, is still ringing in my ears. I looked upon him as a corpse, and, glancing not far into the dreary future, pictured myself led

forth to execution in the presence of the very same spectators then assembled.

Luckily poor Pepper was not seriously hurt; but Grandfather Nutter, appearing in the midst of the confusion (attracted by the howls of young Tell), issued an injunction against all theatricals thereafter, and the place was closed; not, however, without a farewell speech from me, in which I said that this would have been the proudest moment of my life if I hadn't hit Pepper Whitcomb in the mouth. Whereupon the audience (assisted, I am glad to state, by Pepper) cried "Hear! Hear!" I then attributed the accident to Pepper himself, whose mouth, being open at the instant I fired, acted upon the arrow much after the fashion of a whirlpool, and drew in the fatal shaft. I was about to explain how a comparatively small maelstrom could suck in the largest ship, when the curtain fell of its own accord, amid the shouts of the audience.

This was my last appearance on any stage. It was some time, though, before I heard the end of the William Tell business. Malicious little boys who hadn't been allowed to buy tickets to my theatre used to cry out after me in the street,—

"Who killed Cock Robin?"
"I," said the sparrer,
"With my bow and arrow,
I killed Cock Robin!"

The sarcasm of this verse was more than I could stand. And it made Pepper Whitcomb pretty mad to be called Cock Robin, I can tell you!

So the days glided on, with fewer clouds and more sunshine than fall to the lot of most boys. Conway was certainly a cloud. Within school-bounds he seldom ventured to be aggressive; but whenever we met about town he never failed to brush against me, or pull my cap over my eyes, or drive me distracted by inquiring after my family in New Orleans, always alluding to them as highly respectable colored people.

Jack Harris was right when he said Conway would give me no rest until I fought him. I felt it was ordained ages before our birth that we should meet on this planet and fight. With the view of not running counter to destiny, I quietly prepared myself for the impending conflict. The scene of my dramatic triumphs was turned into a gymnasium for this purpose, though I did not openly avow the fact to the boys. By persistently standing on my head, raising heavy weights, and going hand over hand up a ladder, I developed my muscle until my little body was as tough as a hickory knot and as supple as tripe. I also took occasional lessons in the noble art of self-defence, under the tuition of Phil Adams.

I brooded over the matter until the idea of fighting Conway became a part of me. I fought him in imagination during school-hours; I dreamed of fighting with him at night, when he would suddenly expand into a giant twelve feet high, and then as suddenly shrink into a pygmy so small that I couldn't hit him. In this latter shape he would get into my hair, or pop into my waistcoat-pocket, treating me with as little ceremony as the Liliputians showed Captain Lemuel Gulliver,—all of which was not pleasant, to be sure. On the whole, Conway was a cloud.

And then I had a cloud at home. It was not Grandfather Nutter, nor Miss Abigail, nor Kitty Collins, though they all helped to compose it. It was a vague, funereal, impalpable something which no amount of gymnastic training would enable me to knock over. It was Sunday. If ever I have a boy to bring up in the way he should go, I intend to make Sunday a cheerful day to him. Sunday was *not* a cheerful day at the Nutter House. You shall judge for yourself.

It is Sunday morning. I should premise by saying that the deep gloom which has settled over everything set in like a heavy fog early on Saturday evening.

At seven o'clock my grandfather comes smilelessly down stairs. He is dressed in black, and looks as if he had lost all his friends during the night. Miss Abigail, also in black, looks as if she were prepared to bury them, and not indisposed to enjoy the ceremony. Even Kitty Collins has caught the contagious gloom, as I perceive when she brings in the coffee-urn,—a solemn and sculpturesque urn at any time, but monumental now,—and sets it down in front of Miss Abigail. Miss Abigail gazes at the urn as if it held the ashes of her ancestors, instead of a generous quantity of fine old Java coffee. The meal progresses in silence.

Our parlor is by no means thrown open every day. It is open this June morning, and is pervaded by a strong smell of centre-table. The furniture of the room, and the little China ornaments on the mantel-piece, have a constrained, unfamiliar look. My grandfather sits in a mahogany chair, reading a large Bible covered with green baize. Miss Abigail occupies one end of the sofa, and has her hands crossed stiffly in her lap. I sit in the corner, crushed. Robinson Crusoe and Gil Blas are in close confinement. Baron Trenck, who managed to escape from the fortress of Glatz, can't for the life of him get out of our sitting-room closet. Even the Rivermouth Barnacle is suppressed until Monday. Genial converse, harmless books, smiles, lightsome hearts, all are

banished. If I want to read anything, I can read Baxter's *Saints' Rest*. I would die first. So I sit there kicking my heels, thinking about New Orleans, and watching a morbid blue-bottle fly that attempts to commit suicide by butting his head against the window-pane. Listen!—no, yes,—it is—it is the robins singing in the garden,—the greatful, joyous robins singing away like mad, just as if it was't Sunday. Their audacity tickles me.

My grandfather looks up, and inquires in a sepulchral voice if I am ready for Sabbath school. It is time to go. I like the Sabbath school; there are bright young faces *there*, at all events. When I get out into the sunshine alone, I draw a long breath; I would turn a summersault up against Neighbor Penhallow's newly painted fence if I had'n't my best trousers on so glad am I to escape from the oppressive atmosphere of the Nutter House.

Sabbath school over, I go to meeting, joining my grandfather, who doesn't appear to be any relation to me this day, and Miss Abigail, in the porch. Our minister holds out very little hope to any of us of being saved. Convinced that I am a lost creature, in common with the human family, I return home behind my guardians at a snail's pace. We have a dead cold dinner. I saw it laid out yesterday.

There is a long interval between this repast and the second service, and a still longer interval between the beginning and the end of that service; for the Rev. Wibird Hawkins's sermons are none of the shortest, whatever else they may be.

After meeting, my grandfather and I take a walk. We visit—appropriately enough—a neighboring graveyard. I am by this time in a condition of mind to become a willing inmate of the place. The usual evening prayer-meeting is postponed for some reason. At half past eight I go to bed.

This is the way Sunday was observed in the Nutter House, and pretty generally throughout the town, twenty years ago. People who were prosperous and natural and happy on Saturday became the most rueful of human beings in the brief space of twelve hours. I don't think there is any hypocrisy in this. It was merely the old Puritan austerity cropping out once a week. Many of these people were pure Christians every day in the seven,—excepting the seventh. Then they were decorous and solemn to the verge of moroseness. I should not like to be misunderstood on this point. Sunday is a blessed day, and therefore it should not be made a gloomy one. It is the Lord's day, and I do believe that cheerful hearts and faces are not unpleasant in His sight.

"O day of rest! How beautiful, how fair,
How welcome to the weary and the old!
Day of the Lord! and truce to earthly cares!
Day of the Lord, as all our days should be!
Ah, why will man by his austerities
Shut out the blessed sunshine and the light,
And make of thee a dungeon of despair!"

CHAPTER VII.

ONE MEMORABLE NIGHT.

Two months had elapsed since my arrival at Rivermouth, when the approach of an important celebration produced the greatest excitement among the juvenile population of the town.

There was very little hard study done in the Temple Grammar School the week preceding the Fourth of July. For my part, my heart and brain were so full of fire-crackers, Roman-candles, rockets, pin-wheels, squibs, and gunpowder in various seductive forms, that I wonder I didn't explode under Mr. Grimshaw's very nose. I couldn't do a sum to save me; I couldn't tell, for love or money, whether Tallahassee was the capital of Tennessee or of Florida; the present and the pluperfect tenses were inextricably mixed in my memory, and I didn't know a verb from an adjective when I met one. This was not alone my condition, but that of every boy in the school.

Mr. Grimshaw considerably made allowances for our temporary distraction, and sought to fix our interest on the lessons by connecting them directly or indirectly with the coming Event. The class in arithmetic, for instance, was requested to state how many boxes of fire-crackers, each box measuring sixteen inches square, could be stored in a room of such and such dimensions. He gave us the Declaration of Independence for a parsing exercise, and in geography confined his questions almost exclusively to localities rendered famous in the Revolutionary War.

"What did the people of Boston do with the tea on board the English vessels?" asked our wily instructor.

"Threw it into the river!" shrieked the smaller boys, with an impetuosity that made Mr. Grimshaw smile in spite of himself. One luckless urchin said, "Chucked it," for which happy expression he was kept in at recess.

Notwithstanding these clever stratagems, there was not much solid work done by anybody. The trail of the serpent (an inextinguishable but dangerous fire-toy) was over us all. We went round deformed by quantities of Chinese crackers artlessly concealed in our trousers-pockets; and if a boy whipped out his handkerchief without proper precaution, he was sure to let off two or three torpedoes.

Even Mr. Grimshaw was made a sort of accessory to the universal demoralization. In calling the school to order, he always rapped on the table with a heavy ruler. Under the green baize table-cloth, on the exact spot where he usually struck, a certain boy, whose name I withhold, placed a fat torpedo. The result was a loud explosion, which caused Mr. Grimshaw to look queer. Charley Marden was at the water-pail, at the time, and directed general attention to himself by strangling for several seconds and then squirting a slender thread of water over the blackboard.

Mr. Grimshaw fixed his eyes reproachfully on Charley, but said nothing. The real culprit (it wasn't Charley Marden, but the boy whose name I withhold) instantly regretted his badness, and after school confessed the whole thing to Mr. Grimshaw, who heaped coals of fire upon the nameless boy's head by giving him five cents for the Fourth of July. If Mr. Grimshaw had caught this unknown youth, the punishment would not have been half so severe.

On the last day of June the Captain received a letter from my father, enclosing five dollars "for my son Tom," which enabled that young gentleman to make regal preparations for the celebration of our national independence. A portion of this money, two dollars, I hastened to invest in fireworks; the balance I put by for contingencies. In placing the fund in my possession, the Captain imposed one condition that dampened my ardor considerably,—I was to buy no gunpowder. I might have all the snapping-crackers and torpedoes I wanted; but gunpowder was out of the question.

I thought this rather hard, for all my young friends were provided with pistols of various sizes. Pepper Whitcomb had a horse-pistol nearly as large as himself, and Jack Harris, though he to be sure was a big boy, was going to have a real old-fashioned flintlock musket. However, I did n't mean to let this drawback destroy my happiness. I had one charge of powder stowed away in the little brass pistol which I brought from New Orleans, and was bound to make a noise in the world once, if I never did again.

It was a custom observed from time immemorial for the towns-boys to have a bonfire on the Square on the midnight before the Fourth. I did n't ask the Captain's leave to attend this ceremony, for I had a general idea that he would n't give it. If the Captain, I reasoned, does n't forbid me, I break no orders by going. Now this was a specious line of argument, and the mishaps that befell me in consequence of adopting it were richly deserved.

On the evening of the 3d I retired to bed very early, in order to disarm suspicion. I did n't sleep a wink, waiting for eleven o'clock to come round; and I thought it never would come round, as I lay counting from time to time the slow strokes of the ponderous bell in the steeple of the Old North Church. At length the laggard hour arrived. While the clock was striking I jumped out of bed and began dressing.

My grandfather and Miss Abigail were heavy sleepers, and I might have stolen down stairs and out at the front door undetected; but such a commonplace proceeding did not suit my adventurous disposition. I fastened one end of a rope (it was a few yards cut from Kitty Collin's clothes-line) to the bedpost nearest the window, and cautiously climbed out on the wide pediment over the hall door. I had neglected to knot the rope; the result was, that, the moment I swung clear of the pediment, I descended like a flash of lightning, and warmed both my hands smartly. The rope, moreover, was four or five feet too short; so I got a fall that would have proved serious had I not tumbled into the middle of one of the big rose-bushes growing on either side of the steps.

I scrambled out of that without delay, and was congratulating myself on my good luck, when I saw by the light of the setting moon the form of a man leaning over the garden gate. It was one of the town watch, who had probably been observing my operations with curiosity. Seeing no chance of escape, I put a bold face on the matter and walked directly up to him.

"What on airth air you a doin'?" asked the man, grasping the collar of my jacket.

"I live here, sir, if you please," I replied. "and am going to the bonfire. I did n't want to wake up the old folks, that's all."

The man cocked his eye at me in the most amiable manner, and released his hold.

"Boys is boys," he muttered. He didn't attempt to stop me as I slipped through the gate.

Once beyond his clutches, I took to my heels and soon reached the Square, where I found forty or fifty fellows assembled, engaged in building a pyramid of tar-barrels. The palms of my hands still tingled so that I couldn't join in the sport. I stood in the doorway of the Nautilus Bank, watching the workers, among whom I recognized lots of my schoolmates. They looked like a legion of imps, coming and going in the twilight, busy in raising some infernal edifice. What a Babel of voices it was, everybody directing everybody else, and everybody doing everthing wrong

When all was prepared, some one applied a match to the sombre pile. A fiery tongue thrust itself out here and there, then suddenly the whole fabric burst into flames blazing and crackling beautifully. This was a signal for the boys to join hands and dance around the burning barrels, which they did shouting like mad creatures. When the fire had burnt down a little, fresh staves were brought and heaped on the pyre. In the excitement of the moment I forgot my tingling palms, and found myself in the thick of the carousal.

Before we were half ready, our combustible material was expended, and a disheartening kind of darkness settled down upon us. The boys collected together here and there in knots, consulting as to what should be done. It yet lacked four or five hours of day-break, and none of us were in the humor to return to bed. I approached one of the groups standing near the town-pump, and discovered in the uncertain light of the dying brands the figures of Jack Harris, Phil Adams, Harry Blake, and Pepper Whitcomb, their faces streaked with perspiration and tar, and their whole appearance suggestive of New Zealand chiefs.

"Hullo! here's Tom Bailey!" shouted Pepper Whitcomb; "he'll join in!"

Of course he would. The sting had gone out of my hands, and I was ripe for anything,—none the less ripe for not knowing what was on the tapis. After whispering together for a moment, the boys motioned me to follow them.

We glided out from the crowd and silently wended our way through a neighboring alley, at the head of which stood a tumble-down old barn, owned by one Ezra Wingate. In former days this was the stable of the mail-coach that ran between Rivermouth and Boston. When the railroad superseded that primitive mode of travel, the lumbering vehicle was rolled into the barn, and there it stayed. The stage-driver, after prophesying the immediate downfall of the nation, died of grief and apoplexy, and the old coach followed in his wake as fast as it could by quietly dropping to pieces. The barn had the reputation of being haunted, and I think we all kept very close together when we found ourselves standing in the black shadow cast by the tall gable. Here, in a low voice, Jack Harris laid bare his plan, which was to burn the ancient stage-coach.

"The old trundle-cart isn't worth twenty-five cents," said Jack Harris, "and Ezra Wingate ought to thank us for getting the rubbish out of the way. But if any fellow here doesn't want to have a hand in it, let him cut and run, and keep a quiet tongue in his head ever after."

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With this he pulled out the staples that held the rusty padlock, and the big barn door swung slowly open. The interior of the stable was pitch-dark, of course. As we made a movement to enter, a sudden scrambling, and the sound of heavy bodies leaping in all directions, caused us to start back in terror.

"Rats!" cried Phil Adams.

"Bats!" exclaimed Harry Blake.

"Cats!" suggested Jack Harris. "Who's afraid?"

Well, the truth is, we were all afraid: and if the pole of the stage had not been lying close to the threshold, I don't believe anything on earth would have induced us to cross it. We seized hold of the pole-straps and succeeded with great trouble in dragging the coach out. The two fore wheels had rusted to the axle-tree, and refused to revolve. It was the merest skeleton of a coach. The cushions had long since been removed, and the leather hangings, where they had not crumbled away, dangled in shreds from the worm-eaten frame. A load of ghosts and a span of phantom horses to drag them would have made the ghastly thing complete.

Luckily for our undertaking, the stable stood at the top of a very steep hill. With three boys to push behind, and two in front to steer, we started the old coach on its last trip with little or no difficulty. Our speed increased every moment, and, the forewheels becoming unhooked as we arrived at the foot of the declivity, we charged upon the crowd like a regiment of cavalry, scattering the people right and left. Before reaching the bonfire, to which some one had added several bushels of shavings, Jack Harris and Phil Adams, who were steering, dropped on the ground, and allowed the vehicle to pass over them, which it did without injuring them; but the boys who were clinging for dear life to the trunk-rack behind fell over the prostrate steersmen, and there we all lay in a heap, two or three of us quite picturesque with the nose-bleed.

The coach, with an intuitive perception of what was expected of it, plunged into the centre of the kindling shavings, and stopped. The flames sprang up and clung to the rotten woodwork, which burned like tinder. At this moment a figure was seen leaping wildly from the inside of the blazing coach. The figure made three bounds towards us, and tripped over Harry Blake. It was Pepper Whitcomb, with his hair somewhat singed, and his eyebrows completely scorched off!

Pepper had slyly ensconced himself on the back seat before we started, intending to have a neat little ride down hill, and a

laugh at us afterwards. But the laugh, as it happened, was on our side, or would have been, if half a dozen watchmen had not suddenly pounced down upon us, as we lay scrambling on the ground, weak with mirth over Pepper's misfortune. We were collared and marched off before we well knew what had happened.

The abrupt transition from the noise and light of the Square to the silent, gloomy brick room in the rear of the Meat Market seemed like the work of enchantment. We stared at each other aghast.

"Well," remarked Jack Harris, with a sickly smile, "this is a go!"

"No go, I should say," whimpered Harry Blake, glancing at the bare brick walls and the heavy iron-plated door.

"Never say die," muttered Phil Adams, dolefully.

The Bridgewell was a small low-studded chamber built up against the rear end of the Meat Market, and approached from the Square by a narrow passage-way. A portion of the room was partitioned off into eight cells, numbered, each capable of holding two persons. The cells were full at the time, as we presently discovered by seeing several hideous faces leering out at us through the gratings of the doors.

A smoky oil-lamp in a lantern suspended from the ceiling threw a flickering light over the apartment, which contained no furniture excepting a couple of stout wooden benches. It was a dismal place by night, and only little less dismal by day, for the tall houses surrounded "the lock-up" prevented the faintest ray of sunshine from penetrating the ventilator over the door,—a long narrow window opening inward and propped up by a piece of lath.

As we seated ourselves in a row on one of the benches, I imagine that our aspect was anything but cheerful. Adams and Harris looked very anxious, and Harry Blake, whose nose had just stopped bleeding, was mournfully carving his name, by sheer force of habit, on the prison bench. I don't think I ever saw a more "wrecked" expression on any human countenance than Pepper Whitcomb's presented. His look of natural astonishment at finding himself incarcerated in a jail was considerably heightened by his lack of eyebrows.

As for me, it was only by thinking how the late Baron Trenck would have conducted himself under similar circumstances that I was able to restrain my tears.

None of us were inclined to conversation. A deep silence, broken now and then by a startling snore from the cell, reigned throughout the chamber. By and by Pepper Whitcomb glanced nervously towards Phil Adams

and said, "Phil do you think they will—hang us?"

"Hang your grandmother!" returned Adams, impatiently. "what I'm afraid of is that they'll keep us locked up until the Fourth is over."

"You ain't smart if they do!" cried a voice from one of the cells. It was a deep bass voice that sent a chill through me.

"Who are you?" said Jack Harris, addressing the cells in general; for the echoing qualities of the room made it difficult to locate the voice.

"That don't matter," replied the speaker, putting his face close up to the gratings of No. 3, "but if I was a youngster like you, free an' easy outside there, this spot wouldn't hold me long."

"That's so!" chimed several of the prison-birds, wagging their heads behind the iron lattices.

"Hush!" whispered Jack Harris, rising from his seat and walking on tip-toe to the door of cell No. 3. "What would you do?"

"Do? Why, I'd pile them 'ere benches up agin that 'ere door, an' crawl out of that 'ere winder in no time. That's my advice."

"And verry good advice it is, Jim," said the occupant of No. 5, approvingly.

Jack Harris seemed to be of the same opinion, for he hastily placed the benches one on the top of another under the ventilator, and, climbing up on the highest bench, peered out into the passage-way.

"If any gent happens to have a ninepence about him," said the man in cell No. 3, "there's a sufferin' family here as could make use of it. Smallest favors gratefully received, an' no questions axed."

This appeal touched a new silver quarter of a dollar in my trousers-pocket; I fished out the coin from a mass of fireworks, and gave it to the prisoner. He appeared to be so good-natured a fellow that I ventured to ask what he had done to get into jail.

"Intirely innocent. I was clapped in here by a rascally nevev as wishes to enjoy my wealth afore I'm dead."

"Your name, sir?" I inquired, with a view of reporting the outrage to my grandfather and having the injured person reinstated in society.

"Git out, you insolent young reptyle!" shouted the man, in a passion.

I retreated precipitately, amid a roar of laughter from the other cells.

"Can't you keep still?" exclaimed Harris, withdrawing his head from the window.

A portly watchman usually sat on a stool outside the door day and night; but on this particular occasion, his services being required elsewhere, the bride-well had been left to guard itself.

"All clear," whispered Jack Harris as he vanished through the aperture and dropped softly on the ground outside. We all followed him expeditiously.—Pepper Whitcomb and myself getting stuck in the window for a moment in our frantic efforts not to be last.

"Now, boys, everybody for himself!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADVENTURES OF A FOURTH.

The sun cast a broad column of quivering gold across the river at the foot of our street, just as I reached the doorstep of the Nutter House. Kitty Collins, with her dress tucked about her so that she looked as if she had on a pair of calico trousers, was washing off the sidewalk.

"Arrah, you bad boy!" cried Kitty, leaning on the mop-handle, "the Capen has jist been askin' for you. He's gone up town, now. It's a nate thing you done with my clothes-line, and it's me you may thank for gettin' it out of the way before the Capen come down."

The kind creature had hauled in the rope, and my escapade had not been discovered by the family; but I knew very well that the burning of the stage-coach, and the arrest of the boys concerned in the mischief, were sure to reach my grandfather's ears sooner or later.

"Well, Thomas," said the old gentleman, an hour or so afterwards, beaming upon me benevolently across the breakfast-table, "you didn't wait to be called this morning."

"No, sir," I replied, growing very warm, "I took a little run up town to see what was going on."

I didn't say anything about the little run I took home again!

"They had quite a time on the Square last night," remarked Captain Nutter, looking up from the Rivermouth Barnacle, which was always placed beside his coffee-cup at breakfast.

I felt that my hair was preparing to stand on end.

"Quite a time," continued my grandfather. "Some boys broke into Ezra Wingate's barn and carried off the old stage-coach. The young rascals! I do believe they'd burn up the whole town if they had their way."

With this he resumed the paper. After a long silence he exclaimed, "Hullo!"—upon which I nearly fell off the chair.

"'Miscreants unknown,'" read my grandfather, following the paragraph with his forefinger; "'escaped from the briewell, leaving no clue to their identity, except the

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utter H cut on one of the benches.' 'Five dollars reward offered for the apprehension of the perpetrators.' Sho! I hope Wingate will catch them."

I don't see how I continued to live, for on hearing this the breath went entirely out of my body. I beat a retreat from the room as soon as I could, and flew to the stable with a misty intention of mounting Gypsy and escaping from the place. I was pondering what steps to take, when Jack Harris and Charley Marden entered the yard.

"I say," said Harris, as blithe as a lark, "has old Wingate been here?"

"Been here?" I cried, "I should hope not!"

"The whole thing's out, you know," said Harris, pulling Gypsy's forelock over her eyes and blowing playfully into her nostrils.

"You don't mean it!" I gasped.

"Yes, I do, and we are to pay Wingate three dollars apiece. He'll make rather a good spec out of it."

"But how did he discover that we were the— the miscreants?" I asked, quoting mechanically from the Rivermouth Barnacle.

"Why, he saw us take the old ark, confound him! He's been trying to sell it any time these ten years. Now he has sold it to us. When he found that we had slipped out of the Meat Market, he went right off and wrote the advertisement offering five dollars reward; though he knew well enough who had taken the coach, for he came round to my father's house before the paper was printed to talk the matter over. Was n't the governor mad, though! But it's all settled, I tell you. We're to pay Wingate fifteen dollars for the old go-cart, which he wanted to sell the other day for seventy-five cents, and could n't. It's a downright swindle. But the funny part of it is to come."

"O, there's a funny part to it, is there?" I remarked bitterly.

"Yes. The moment Bill Conway saw the advertisement, he knew it was Harry Blake who cut that letter H on the bench; so off he rushes up to Wingate—kind of him, was n't it?—and claims the reward. 'Too late, young man,' says old Wingate, 'the culprits have been discovered.' You see Slyboots had n't any intention of paying that five-dollars."

Jack Harris's statement lifted a weight from my bosom. The article in the Rivermouth Barnacle had placed the affair before me in a new light. I had thoughtlessly committed a grave offence. Though the property in question was valueless, we were clearly wrong in destroying it. At the same time Mr. Wingate had tacitly sanctioned the act by not preventing it when he might easily

have done so. He had allowed his property to be destroyed in order that he might realize a large profit.

Without waiting to hear more, I went straight to Captain Nutter, and, laying my remaining three dollars on his knee, confessed my share in the previous night's transaction.

The Captain heard me through in profound silence, pocketed the bank-notes, and walked off without speaking a word. He had punished me in his own whimsical fashion at the breakfast-table, for, at the very moment he was harrowing up my soul by reading the extracts from the Rivermouth Barnacle, he not only knew all about the bonfire, but had paid Ezra Wingate his three dollars. Such was the duplicity of that aged impostor!

I think Captain Nutter was justified in retaining my pocket-money, as additional punishment, though the possession of it later in the day would have got me out of a difficult position, as the reader will see further on.

I returned with a light heart and a large piece of punk to my friends in the stable yard, where we celebrated the termination of our trouble by setting off two packs of fire-crackers in an empty wine cask. They made a prodigious racket, but failed somehow to fully express my feelings. The little brass pistol in my bedroom suddenly occurred to me. It had been loaded I don't know how many months, long before I left New Orleans, and now was the time, if ever, to fire it off. Muskets, blunderbusses, and pistols were banging away lively all over town, and the smell of gunpowder, floating on the air, set me wild to add something respectable to the universal din.

When the pistol was produced, Jack Harris examined the rusty cap and prophesied that it would not explode.

"Never mind," said I, "let's try it."

I had fired the pistol once, secretly, in New Orleans, and, remembering the noise it gave birth to on that occasion, I shut both eyes tight as I pulled the trigger. The hammer clicked on the cap with a dull, dead sound. Then Harris tried it; then Charley Marden; then I took it again, and after three or four trials was on the point of giving it up as a bad job, when the obstinate thing went off with a tremendous explosion, nearly jerking my arm from the socket. The smoke cleared away, and there I stood with the stock of the pistol clutched convulsively in my hand,—the barrel, lock, trigger, and ramrod having vanished into thin air.

"Are you hurt?" cried the boys, in one breath.

"N—no," I replied, dubiously, for the concussion had bewildered me a little.

When I realized the nature of the calamity, my grief was excessive. I can't imagine what led me to do so ridiculous a thing, but I gravely buried the remains of my beloved pistol in our back garden, and erected over the mound a slate tablet to the effect that "Mr. Barker, formerly of New Orleans, was killed accidentally on the Fourth of July, 18—in the 2nd year of his Age."* Binny Wallace, arriving on the spot just after the disaster, and Charley Marden (who enjoyed the obsequies immensely), acted with me as chief mourners. I, for my part, was a very sincere one.

As I turned away in a disconsolate mood from the garden, Charley Marden remarked that he shouldn't be surprised if the pistol-butt took root and grew into a mahogany-tree or something. He said he once planted an old musket-stock, and shortly afterwards a lot of shoots sprung up! Jack Harris laughed; but neither I nor Binny Wallace saw Charley's wicked joke.

We were now joined by Pepper Whitcomb, Fred Langdon, and several other desperate characters, on their way to the Square, which was always a busy place when public festivities were going on. Feeling that I was still in disgrace with the Captain, I thought it politic to ask his consent before accompanying the boys.

He gave it with some hesitation, advising me to be careful not to get in front of the firearms. Once he put his fingers mechanically into his vest-pocket and half drew forth some dollar-bills, then slowly thrust them back again as his sense of justice overcame his genial disposition. I guess it cut the old gentleman to the heart to be obliged to keep me out of my pocket-money. I know it did me. However, as I was passing through the hall, Miss Abigail, with a very severe cast of countenance, slipped a brand-new quarter into my hand. We had silver currency in those days, thank Heaven!

Great were the bustle and confusion on the Square. By the way, I don't know why they called this large open space a square, unless because it was an oval,—an oval formed by the confluence of half a dozen streets, now thronged by crowds of smartly dressed towns-people and country folks; for Rivermouth on the Fourth was the centre of attraction to the inhabitants of the neighboring villages.

On one side of the Square were twenty or thirty booths arranged in a semi-circle, gay

* The inscription is copied from a triangular-shaped piece of slate, still preserved in the garret of the Nutter House, together with the pistol-but itself, which was subsequently dug up for a *post-mortem* examination.

with little flags and seductive with lemonade, ginger beer, and seed cake. Here and there were tables at which could be purchased the smaller sort of fireworks, such as pin-wheels, serpents, double-headers, and punk warranted not to go out. Many of the adjacent houses made a pretty display of bunting, and across each of the streets opening on the Square was an arch of spruce and evergreen, blossoming all over with patriotic mottoes and paper roses.

It was a noisy, merry, bewildering scene as we came upon the ground. The incessant rattle of small arms, the booming of the twelve-pounder firing on the Mill Dam, and the silvery clangor of the church-bells ringing simultaneously,—not to mention an ambitious brass-band that was blowing itself to pieces on a balcony,—were enough to drive one distracted. We amused ourselves for an hour or two, darting in and out among the crowd and setting off our crackers. At one o'clock the Hon. Hezekiah Elkins mounted a platform in the middle of the Square and delivered an oration, to which his "feller-citizens" didn't pay much attention, having all they could do to dodge the squibs that were set loose upon them by mischievous boys stationed on the surrounding house-tops.

Our little party which had picked up recruits here and there, not being swayed by eloquence, withdrew to a booth on the outskirts of the crowd, where we regaled ourselves with root-beer at two cents a glass. I recollect being much struck by the placard surmounting this tent:—

ROOT BEER
SOLD HERE.

It seemed to me the perfection of pith and poetry. What could be more terse? Not a word to spare, and yet everything fully expressed. Rhyme and rhythm faultless. As for the beer itself,—that, I think, must have been made from the root of all evil! A single glass of it insured an uninterrupted pain for twenty-four hours.

The influence of my liberality working on Charley Marden,—for it was I who paid for the beer,—he presently invited us all to take an ice-cream with him at Pettingil's saloon. Pettingil was the Delmonico of Rivermouth. He furnished ices and confectionery for aristocratic balls and parties, and didn't disdain to officiate as leader of the orchestra at the same; for Pettingil played on the violin, as Pepper Whitcomb described it, "like Old Scratch."

Pettingil's confectionery store was on the corner of Willow and High Streets. The

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saloon, separated from the shop by a flight of three steps leading to a door hung with faded red drapery, had about it an air of mystery and seclusion quite delightful. Four windows, also draped, faced the side-street, affording an unobstructed view of Marm Hatch's back yard, where a number of inexplicable garments on a clothes-line were always to be seen careering in the wind.

There was a lull just then in the ice-cream business, it being dinner-time, and we found the saloon unoccupied. When we had seated ourselves around the largest marble-topped table, Charley Marden in a manly voice ordered twelve sixpenny ice-creams, "strawberry and verneller mixed."

It was a magnificent sight, those twelve chilly glasses entering the room on a waiter, the red and white custard rising from each glass like a church-steeple, and the spoon-handle shooting up from the apex like a spire. I doubt if a person of the nicest palate could have distinguished, with his eyes shut, which was the vernilla and which the strawberry; but if I could at this moment obtain a cream tasting as that did, I would give five dollars for a very small quantity.

We fell to with a will, and so evenly balanced were our capabilities that we finished our creams together, the spoons clinking in the glasses like one spoon.

"Let's have some more!" cried Charley Marden with the air of Aladdin ordering up a fresh hogshead of pearls and rubies. "Tom Bailey, tell Pettingil to send in another round."

Could I credit my ears? I looked at him to see if he were in earnest. He meant it. In a moment more I was leaning over the counter giving directions for a second supply. Thinking it would make no difference to such a gorgeous young sybarite as Marden, I took the liberty of ordering ninepenny creams this time.

On returning to the saloon, what was my horror at finding it empty!

There were the twelve cloudy glasses, standing in a circle on the sticky marble slab, and not a boy to be seen. A pair of hands letting go their hold on the window-sill outside explained matters. I had been made a victim.

I couldn't stay and face Pettingil, whose peppery temper was well known among the boys. I hadn't a cent in the world to appease him. What should I do? I heard the clink of approaching glasses,—the ninepenny creams. I rushed to the nearest window. It was only five feet to the ground. I threw myself out as if I had been an old hat.

Landing on my feet, I fled breathlessly down High Street, through Willow, and was turning into Brierwood Place when the sound of several voices, calling to me in distress, stopped my progress.

"Look out, you fool! the mine! the mine!" yelled the warning voices.

Several men and boys were standing at the head of the street, making insane gestures to me to avoid something. But I saw no mine, only in the middle of the road in front of me was a common flour-barrel, which, as I gazed at it, suddenly rose into the air with a terrific explosion. I felt myself thrown violently off my feet. I remember nothing else, excepting that, as I went up, I caught a momentary glimpse of Ezra Wingate leering through his shop window like an avenging spirit.

The mine that had wrought me woe was not properly a mine at all, but merely a few ounces of powder placed under an empty keg or barrel and fired with a slow-match. Boys who didn't happen to have pistols or cannon generally burnt their powder in this fashion.

For an account of what followed I am indebted to hearsay, for I was insensible when the people picked me up and carried me home on a shutter borrowed from the proprietor of Pettingil's saloon. I was supposed to be killed, but happily (happily for me at least) I was merely stunned. I lay in a semi-unconscious state until eight o'clock that night, when I attempted to speak. Miss Abigail, who watched by the bedside, put her ear down to my lips and was saluted with these remarkable words:

"Strawberry and verneller mixed!"

"Mercy on us! what is the boy saying?" cried Miss Abigail.

"ROOTBEERSOLDHERE!"

CHAPTER IX.

I BECAME AN R. M. C.

In the course of ten days I recovered sufficiently from my injuries to attend school, where, for a little while, I was looked upon as a hero, on account of having been blown up. What don't we make a hero of? The distraction which prevailed in the classes the week preceding the Fourth had subsided, and nothing remained to indicate the recent festivities, excepting a noticeable want of eyebrows on the part of Pepper Whitcomb and myself.

In August we had two week's vacation. It was about this time that I became a member of the Rivermouth Centipedes, a secret society composed of twelve of the Temple Grammar School boys. This was

an honor to which I had long aspired, but, being a new boy, I was not admitted to the fraternity until my character had fully developed itself.

It was a very select society, the object of which I never fathomed, though I was an active member of the body during the remainder of my residence at Rivermouth, and at one time held the enorinous position of F. C.,—First Centipede. Each of the elect wore a copper cent (some occult association being established between a cent apiece and a centipede!) suspended by a string round his neck. The medals were worn next the skin, and it was while bathing one day at Grave Point, with Jack Harris and Fred Langdon, that I had my curiosity roused to the highest pitch by a sight of these singular emblems. As soon as I ascertained the existence of a boys' club, of course I was ready to die to join it. And eventually I was allowed to join.

The initiation ceremony took place in Fred Langdon's barn, where I was submitted to a series of trials not calculated to soothe the nerves of a timorous boy. Before being led to the Grotto of Enchantment,—such was the modest title given to the loft over my friend's wood-house,—my hands were securely pinioned, and my eyes covered with a thick silk handkerchief. At the head of the stairs I was told in an unrecognizable, husky voice, that it was not yet too late to retreat if I felt myself physically too weak to undergo the necessary tortures. I replied that I was not too weak, in a tone which I intended to be resolute, but which, in spite of me, seemed to come from the pit of my stomach.

"It is well!" said the husky voice.

I did not feel so sure about that; but, having made up my mind to be a Centipede, a Centipede I was bound to be. Other boys had passed through the ordeal and lived, why should not I?

A prolonged silence followed this preliminary examination, and I was wondering what would come next, when a pistol fired off close by my ear deafened me for a moment. The unknown voice then directed me to take ten steps forward and stop at the word halt. I took ten steps, and halted.

"Stricken mortal," said a second husky voice, more husky, if possible, than the first, "if you had advanced another inch, you would have disappeared down an abyss three thousand feet deep!"

I naturally shrunk back at this friendly piece of information. A prick from some two-pronged instrument, evidently a pitchfork, gently checked my retreat. I was then conducted to the brink of several other precipices, and ordered to step over many

dangerous chasms, where the result would have been instant death if I had committed the least mistake. I have neglected to say that my movements were accompanied by dismal groans from different parts of the grotto.

Finally, I was led up a steep plank to what appeared to me an incalculable height. Here I stood breathless while the by-laws were read aloud. A more extraordinary code of laws never came from the brain of man. The penalties attached to the abject being who should reveal any of the secrets of the society were enough to make the blood run cold. A second pistol-shot was heard, the something I stood on sunk with a crash beneath my feet, and I fell two miles, as nearly as I could compute it. At the same instant the handkerchief was whisked from my eyes, and I found myself standing in an empty hog'shead surrounded by twelve masked figures fantastically dressed. One of the conspirators was really appalling with a tin sauce-pan on his head, and a tiger-skin sleigh-robe thrown over his shoulders. I scarcely need say that there were no vestiges to be seen of the fearful gulfs over which I had passed so cautiously. My ascent had been to the top of the hog'shead, and my descent to the bottom thereof. Holding one another by the hand, and chanting a low dirge, the Mystic Twelve revolved about me. This concluded the ceremony. With a merry shout the boys threw off their masks, and I was declared a regularly installed member of the R. M. C.

I afterwards had a good deal of sport out of the club, for these initiations, as you may imagine, were sometimes very comical spectacles, especially when the aspirant for centipede honors happened to be of a timid disposition. If he showed the slightest terror, he was certain to be tricked unmercifully. One of our subsequent devices—a humble invention of my own—was to request the blindfolded candidate to put out his tongue, whereupon the First Centipede would say, in a low tone, as if not intended for the ear of the victim, "Diabolus, fetch me the red-hot iron!" The expedition with which that tongue would disappear was simply ridiculous.

Our meetings were held in various barns, at no stated periods, but as circumstances suggested. Any member had a right to call a meeting. Each boy who failed to report himself was fined one cent. Whenever a member had reasons for thinking that another member would be unable to attend, he called a meeting. For instance, immediately on learning the death of Harry Blake's grandfather, I issued a call. By this simple and ingenious method we kept our treasury

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in a flourishing condition, sometimes having on hand as much as a dollar and a quarter.

I have said that the society had no especial object. It is true, there was a tacit understanding among us that the Centipedes were to stand by one another on all occasions, though I don't remember that they did; but further than this we had no purpose, unless it was to accomplish as a body the same amount of mischief which we were sure to do as individuals. To mystify the staid and slow-going Rivermouthians was our frequent pleasure. Several of our pranks won us such a reputation among the townsfolk, that we were cred'ed with having a large finger in whatever went amiss in the place.

One morning, about a week after my admission into the secret order, the quiet citizens awoke to find that the sign-boards of all the principal streets had changed places during the night. People who went trustfully to sleep in Currant Square opened their eyes in Honeysuckle Terrace. Jones's Avenue at the north end had suddenly become Walnut Street, and Peanut Street was nowhere to be found. Confusion reigned. The town authorities took the matter in hand without delay, and six of the Temple Grammar School boys were summoned to appear before Justice Clapham.

Having tearfully disclaimed to my grandfather all knowledge of the transaction, I disappeared from the family circle, and was not apprehended until late in the afternoon, when the Captain dragged me ignominiously from the haymow and conducted me, more dead than alive, to the office of Justice Clapham. Here I encountered five other pallid culprits, who had been fished out of divers coal-bins, garrets, and chicken-coops, to answer the demands of the outraged laws. (Charley Marden had hidden himself in a pile of gravel behind his father's house, and looked like a recently exhumed mummy.)

There was not the least evidence against us; and, indeed, we were wholly innocent of the offence. The trick, as was afterwards proved, had been played by a party of soldiers stationed at the fort in the harbor. We were indebted for our arrest to Master Conway, who had slyly dropped a hint, within the hearing of Selectman Mudge, to the effect that "young Bailey and his five cronies could tell something about them signs." When he was called upon to make good his assertion, he was considerably more terrified than the Centipedes, though they were ready to sink into their shoes.

At our next meeting it was unanimously resolved that Conway's animosity should not be quietly submitted to. He had sought to inform against us in the stage-

coach business; he had volunteered to car Pettingil's "little bill" for twenty-four ice-creams to Charley Marden's father; and now he had caused us to be arraigned before Justice Clapham on a charge equally groundless and painful. After much noisy discussion a plan of retaliation was agreed upon.

There was a certain slim, mild apothecary in the town, by the name of Meeks. It was generally given out that Mr. Meeks had a vague desire to get married, but, being a shy and timorous youth, lacked the moral courage to do so. It was also well known that the Widow Conway had not buried her heart with the late lamented. As to her shyness, that was not so clear. Indeed, her attentions to Mr. Meeks, whose mother she might have been, were of a nature not to be misunderstood, and were not misunderstood by any one but Mr. Meeks himself.

The widow carried on a dress-making establishment at her residence on the corner opposite Meeks's drug-store, and kept a wary eye on all the young ladies from Miss Dorothy Gibbs's Female Institute who patronized the shop for soda-water, acid-drops, and slate-pencils. In the afternoon the widow was usually seen seated, smartly dressed at her window up stairs, casting destructive glances across the street,—the artificial roses in her cap and her whole languishing manner saying as plainly as a label on a prescription, "To be Taken Immediately!" But Mr. Meeks didn't take.

The lady's fondness, and the gentleman's blindness, were topics ably handled at every sewing-circle in the town. It was through these two luckless individuals that we proposed to strike a blow at the common enemy. To kill less than three birds with one stone did not suit our sanguinary purpose. We disliked the widow not so much for her sentimentality as for being the mother of Bill Conway; we disliked Mr. Meeks, not because he was insipid, like his own syrups, but because the widow loved him; Bill Conway we hated for himself.

Late one dark Saturday night in September we carried our plan into effect. On the following morning, as the orderly citizens wended their way to church past the widow's abode, their sober faces relaxed at beholding over her front door the well-known gilt Mortar and Pestle which usually stood on the top of a pole on the opposite corner; while the passers on that side of the street were equally amused and scandalized at seeing a placard bearing the following announcement tacked to the druggist's window-shutters—

Wanted, a Sempstress!

The naughty cleverness of the joke (which

I should be sorry to defend) was recognized at once. It spread like wildfire over the town, and, though the mortar and the placard were speedily removed, our triumph was complete. The whole community was on the broad grin, and our participation in the affair seemingly unsuspected.

It was those wicked soldiers at the fort!

CHAPTER X.

I FIGHT CONWAY.

There was one person, however, who cherished a strong suspicion that the Centipedes had had a hand in the business; and that person was Conway. His red hair seemed to change to a livelier red, and his sallow cheeks to a deeper sallow, as we glanced at him stealthily over the tops of our slates the next day in school. He knew we were watching him, and made sundry mouths and scowled in the most threatening way over his sums.

Conway had an accomplishment peculiarly his own,—that of throwing his thumbs out of joint at will. Sometimes while absorbed in study, or on becoming nervous at recitation, he performed the feat unconsciously. Throughout this entire morning his thumbs were observed to be in a chronic state of dislocation, indicating great mental agitation on the part of the owner. We fully expected an outbreak from him at recess; but the intermission passed off tranquilly, somewhat to our disappointment.

At the close of the afternoon session it happened that Binny Wallace and myself, having got swamped in our Latin exercise, were detained in school for the purpose of refreshing our memories with a page of Mr. Andrew's perplexing irregular verbs. Binny Wallace finishing his task first, was dismissed. I followed shortly after, and, on stepping into the playground, saw my little friend plastered, as it were, up against the fence, and Conway standing in front of him ready to deliver a blow on the upturned, unprotected face, whose gentleness would have stayed any arm but a coward's.

Seth Rodgers, with both hands in his pockets, was leaning against the pump lazily enjoying the sport; but on seeing me sweep across the yard, whirling my strap of books in the air like a sling, he called out lustily, "Lay low, Conway! here's young Bailey!"

Conway turned just in time to catch on his shoulder the blow intended for his head. He reached forward one of his long arms—he had arms like a windmill, that boy—and, grasping me by the hair, tore out quite a respectable handful. The tears flew to my eyes, but they were not the tears of defeat;

they were merely the involuntary tribute which nature paid to the departed tresses.

In a second my little jacket lay on the ground, and I stood on guard, resting lightly on my right leg and keeping my eye fixed steadily on Conway's—in all of which I was faithfully following the instructions of Phil Adams, whose father subscribed to a sporting journal.

Conway also threw himself into a defensive attitude, and there we were, glaring at each other, motionless, neither of us disposed to risk an attack, but both on the alert to resist one. There is no telling how long we might have remained in that absurd position, had we not been interrupted.

It was a custom with the larger pupils to return to the play-ground after school, and play base-ball until sundown. The town authorities had prohibited ball-playing on the Square, and there being no other available place, the boys fell back perforce on the school-yard. Just at this crisis a dozen or so of the Templars entered the gate, and, seeing at a glance the belligerent status of Conway and myself, dropped bat and ball, and rushed to the spot where we stood.

"Is it a fight?" asked Phil Adams, who saw by our freshness that we had not yet got to work.

"Yes, it's a fight," I answered, "unless Conway will ask Wallace's pardon, promise never to hector me in future,—and put back my hair!"

This last condition was rather a staggerer.

"I sha'n't do nothing of the sort," said Conway, sulkily.

"Then the thing must go on," said Adams, with dignity. "Rodgers, as I understand it, is your second, Conway? Bailey, come here. What's the row about?"

"He was thrashing Binny Wallace"

"No, I wasn't," interrupted Conway; "but I was going to, because he knows who put Meek's mortar over our door. And I know well enough who did it; it was that sneaking little mulatter!"—pointing at me.

"O, by George!" I cried, reddening at the insult.

"Cool is the word," said Adams, as he bound a handkerchief round my head, and carefully tucked away the long straggling locks that offered a tempting advantage to the enemy. "Who ever heard of a fellow with such a head of hair going into action!" muttered Phil, twitching the handkerchief to ascertain if it were securely tied. He then loosened my gallowses (braces) and buckled them tightly above my hips. "Now, then, bantam, never say die!"

Conway regarded these business-like preparations with evident misgiving, for he

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called Rodgers to his side, and had himself arrayed in a similar manner, though his hair was cropped so close that you couldn't have taken hold of it with a pair of tweezers.

"Is your man ready?" asked Phil Adams, addressing Rodgers.

"Ready!"

"Keep your back to the gate, Tom," whispered Phil in my ear, "and you will have the sun in his eyes."

Behold us once more face to face, like David and the Philistine. Look at us as long as you may for this is all you shall see of the combat. According to my thinking, the hospital teaches a better lesson than the battle-field. I will tell you about my black eye, and my swollen lip, if you will; but not a word of the fight.

You'll get no description of it from me, simply because I think it would prove very poor reading, and not because I consider my revolt against Conway's tyranny unjustifiable.

I had borne Conway's persecutions for many months with lamb-like patience. I might have shielded myself by appealing to Mr. Grimshaw; but no boy in the Temple Grammar School could do that without losing caste. Whether this was just or not doesn't matter a pin, since it was so.—a traditional law of the place. The personal inconvenience I suffered from my tormentor was nothing to the pain he inflicted on me indirectly by his persistent cruelty to little Binny Wallace. I should have lacked the spirit of a hen if I had not resented it finally. I am glad that I faced Conway, and asked no favors, and got rid of him forever. I am glad that Phil Adams taught me to box, and I say to all youngsters, learn to box, to ride, to pull an oar, and to swim. The occasion may come round, when a decent proficiency in one or the rest of these accomplishments will be of service to you.

In one of the best books* ever written for boys are these words:—

"Learn to box, then, as you learn to play cricket and football. Not one of you will be the worse, but very much the better, for learning to box well. Should you never have to use it in earnest there's no exercise in the world so good for the temper, and for the muscles of the back and legs.

"As for fighting, keep out of it, if you can, by all means. When the time comes, if ever it should, that you have to say 'Yes' or 'No' to a challenge to fight, say 'No' if you can,—only take care you make it plain to yourself why you say 'No.' It's a proof of the highest courage, if done from true Christian motives. It's quite right and justifiable, if done from a simple aversion to

* "Tom Brown's School Days at Rugby."

physical pain and danger. But don't say 'No' because you fear a licking and say or think it's because you fear God, for that's neither Christian nor honest. And if you do fight, fight it out; and don't give in while you can stand and see."

And don't give in when you can't! say I. For I could stand very little, and see not at all (having pummelled the school-pump for the last twenty seconds), when Conway retired from the field. As Phil Adams stepped up to shake hands with me, he received a telling blow in the stomach; for all the fight was not out of me yet, and I mistook him for a new adversary.

Convinced of my error, I accepted his congratulations, with those of the other boys, blandly and blindly. I remember that Binny Wallace wanted to give me his silver pencil-case. The gentle soul had stood throughout the contest with his face turned to the fence, suffering untold agony.

A good wash at the pump, and a cold key applied to my eye, refreshed me amazingly. Escorted by two or three of the school-fellows, I walked home through the pleasant autumn twilight, battered but triumphant. As I went along, my cap cocked on one side to keep the chilly air from my eye, I felt that I was not only following my nose, but following it so closely, that I was in some danger of treading on it. I seemed to have nose enough for the whole party. My left cheek, also, was puffed out like a dumpling. I couldn't help saying to myself, "If *this* is victory, how about that other fellow?"

"Tom," said Harry Blake, hesitating.

"Well?"

"Did you see Mr. Grimshaw looking out of the recitation-room window just as we left the yard?"

"No; was he, though?"

"I am sure of it.

"Then he must have seen all the row."

"Shouldn't wonder."

"No, he didn't," broke in Adams, "or he would have stopped it short metre; but I guess he saw you pitching into the pump,—which you did uncommonly strong,—and of course he smelt mischief directly."

"Well, it can't be helped now," I reflected.

"—As the monkey said when he fell out of the cocoa-nut tree," added Charley Marden, trying to make me laugh.

It was early candle-light when we reached the house. Miss Abigail, opening the front door, started back at my hilarious appearance. I tried to smile upon her sweetly, but the smile, rippling over my swollen cheek, and dying away like a spent wave on my nose, produced an expression of which Miss Abigail declared she had never seen

the like excepting on the face of a Chinese idol.

She hustled me unceremoniously into the presence of my grandfather in the sitting-room. Captain Nutter, as the recognized professional warrior of our family, could not consistently take me to the task for fighting Conway; nor was he disposed to do so; for the Captain was well aware of the long-continued provocation I had endured.

"Ah, you rascal!" cried the old gentleman, after hearing my story, "just like me when I was young,—always in one kind of trouble or another. I believe it runs in the family."

"I think," said Miss Abigail, without the faintest expression on her countenance, "that a table-spoonful of hot-dro—"

The Captain interrupted Miss Abigail peremptorily, directing her to make a shade out of card-board and black silk, to tie over my eye. Miss Abigail must have been possessed with the idea that I had taken up pugilism as a profession, for she turned out no fewer than six of these blinders.

"They'll be handy to have in the house," says Miss Abigail, grimly.

Of course, so great a breach of discipline was not to be passed over by Mr. Grimshaw. He had, as we suspected, witnessed the closing scene of the fight from the school-room window, and the next morning, after prayers, I was not wholly unprepared when Master Conway and myself were called up to the desk for examination. Conway, with a piece of court-plaster in the shape of a Maltese cross on his right cheek, and I with the silk patch over my left eye, caused a general titter through the room.

"Silence," said Mr. Grimshaw, sharply.

As the reader is already familiar with the leading points in the case of Bailey *versus* Conway, I shall not report the trial further than to say that Adams, Marden, and several other pupils testified the fact that Conway had imposed on me ever since my first day at the Temple School. Their evidence also went to show that Conway was a quarrelsome character generally. Bad for Conway. Seth Rodgers, on the part of his friend, proved that I had struck the first blow. That was bad for me.

"If you please, sir," said Binny Wallace, holding up his hand for permission to speak, "Bailey didn't fight on his own account; he fought on my account, and, if you please, sir, I am the boy to be blamed, for I was the cause of the trouble."

This drew out the story of Conway's harsh treatment of the smaller boys. As Binny related the wrongs of his play-fellows, saying very little of his own grievances, I noticed that Mr. Grimshaw's hand,

unknown to himself perhaps, rested lightly from time to time on Wallace's sunny hair. The examination finished, Mr. Grimshaw leaned on the desk thoughtfully for a moment, and then said:—

"Every boy in this school knows that it is against the rules to fight. If one boy maltreats another, within school-bounds or within school-hours, that is a matter for me to settle. The case should be laid before me. I disapprove of tale-bearing, I never encourage it in the slightest degree, but when one pupil systematically persecutes a schoolmate, it is the duty of some head boy to inform me. No pupil has a right to take the law in his own hands. If there is any fighting to be done, I am the person to be consulted. I disapprove of boys' fighting; it is unnecessary and unchristian. In the present instance, I consider every large boy in this school at fault; but as the offence is one of omission rather than commission, my punishment must rest only on the two boys convicted of misdemeanor. Conway loses his recess for a month, and Bailey has a page added to his Latin lessons for the next four recitations. I now request Bailey and Conway to shake hands in the presence of the school, and acknowledge their regret at what has occurred."

Conway and I approached each other slowly and cautiously, as if we were bent upon another hostile collision. We clasped hands in the tamest manner imaginable, and Conway mumbled, "I'm sorry I fought with you."

"I think you are," I replied, drily, "and I'm sorry I had to thrash you."

"You can go to your seats," said Mr. Grimshaw, turning his face aside to hide a smile. I am sure my apology was a very good one.

I never had any more trouble with Conway. He and his shadow, Seth Rodgers, gave me a wide berth for many months. Nor was Binny Wallace subjected to further molestation. Miss Abigail's sanitary stores, including a bottle of opodeldoc, were never called into requisition. The six black silk patches, with their elastic strings, are still dangling from a beam in the garret of the Nutter House, waiting for me to get into fresh difficulties.

CHAPTER XI.

ALL ABOUT GYPSY.

This record of my life at Rivermouth would be strangely incomplete did I not devote an entire chapter to Gypsy. I had other pets, of course; for what healthy boy

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could long exist without numerous friends in the animal kingdom? I had two white mice that were forever gnawing their way out of a pasteboard *chateau*, and crawling over my face when I lay asleep. I used to keep the pink-eyed little beggars in my bedroom, greatly to the annoyance of Miss Abigail, who was constantly fancying that one of the mice had secreted itself somewhere about her person.

I also owned a dog, a terrier, who managed in some inscrutable way to pick a quarrel with the moon, and on bright nights kept up such a ki-yi-ing in our back garden, that we were finally forced to dispose of him at private sale. He was purchased by Mr. Oxford, the butcher. I protested against the arrangement, and ever afterwards, when we had sausages from Mr. Oxford's shop, I made believe I detected in them certain evidences that Cato had been foully dealt with.

Of birds I had no end,—robins, purple-martins, wrens, bulfinches, bobolinks, ring-doves, and pigeons. At one time I took solid comfort in the iniquitous society of a dissipated old parrot, who talked so terribly, that the Rev. Wibird Hawkins, happening to get a sample of Poll's vituperative powers, pronounced him "a benighted heathen," and advised the Captain to get rid of him. A brace of turtles supplanted the parrot in my affections; the turtles gave way to rabbits; and the rabbits in turn yielded to the superior charms of a small monkey, which the Captain bought of a sailor lately from the coast of Africa.

But Gypsy was the prime favorite, in spite of many rivals. I never grew weary of her. She was the most knowing little thing in the world. Her proper sphere in life—and the one to which she ultimately attained—was the saw-dust arena of a travelling circus. There was nothing short of the three R's, reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic, that Gypsy could n't be taught. The gift of speech was not hers, but the faculty of thought was.

My little friend, to be sure, was not exempt from certain graceful weaknesses, inseparable, perhaps, from the female character. She was very pretty, and she knew it. She was also passionately fond of dress,—by which I mean her best harness. When she had this on, her curvetings and prancings, laughable, though in ordinary tackle she went along demurely enough. There was something in the enamelled leather and the silver-washed mountings that chimed with her artistic sense. To have her mane braided, and a rose or a pansy stuck into her forelock, was to make her too conceited for anything.

She had another trait not rare among her

sex. She liked the attentions of young gentlemen, while the society of girls bored her. She would drag them, sulkily, in the cart; but as for permitting one of them in the saddle, the idea was preposterous. Once when Pepper Whitcomb's sister, in spite of our remonstrances, ventured to mount her, Gypsy gave a little indignant neigh, and tossed the gentle Emma heels over head in no time. But with any of the boys the mare was as docile as a lamb.

Her treatment of the several members of the family was comical. For the Captain she entertained a wholesome respect, and was always on her good behavior when he was around. As to Miss Abigail, Gypsy simple laughed at her,—literally laughed, contracting her upper lip and displaying all her snowwhite teeth, as if something about Miss Abigail struck her, Gypsy, as being extremely ridiculous.

Kitty Collins, for some reason or another, was afraid of the pony, or pretended to be. The sagacious little animal knew it, of course, and frequently, when Kitty was hanging out clothes near the stable, the mare being loose in the yard, would make short plunges at her. Once Gypsy seized the basket of clothes-pins with her teeth, and rising on her hind legs, pawing the air with her fore feet followed Kitty clear up to the scullery steps.

That part of the yard was shut off from the rest by a gate; but no gate was proof against Gypsy's ingenuity. She could let down bars, lift up latches, draw bolts, and turn all sorts of buttons. This accomplishment rendered it hazardous for Miss Abigail or Kitty to leave any eatables on the kitchen table near the window. On one occasion Gypsy put in her head and lapped up six custard pies that had been placed by the casement to cool.

An account of my young lady's various pranks would fill a thick volume. A favorite trick of hers, on being requested to "walk like Miss Abigail," was to assume a little skittish gait so true to nature that Miss Abigail herself was obliged to admit the cleverness of the imitation.

The idea of putting Gypsy through a systematic course of instruction was suggested to me by a visit to the circus which gave an annual performance in Rivermouth. This show embraced among its attractions a number of trained Shetland ponies, and I determined that Gypsy should likewise have the benefit of a liberal education. I succeeded in teaching her to waltz, to fire a pistol by tugging at a string tied to the trigger, to lie down dead, to wink one eye, and to execute many other feats of a difficult nature. She took to her studies ad-

mirably, and enjoyed the whole thing as much as any one.

The monkey was a perpetual marvel to Gypsy. They became bosom-friends in an incredibly brief period, and were never easy out of each other's sight. Prince Zany—that's what Pepper Whitcomb and I christened him one day, much to the disgust of the monkey, who bit a piece out of Pepper's nose—resided in the stable, and went to roost every night on the pony's back, where I usually found him in the morning. Whenever I rode out, I was obliged to secure his Highness the Prince with a stout cord to the fence, he chattering all the time like a madman.

One afternoon as I was cantering through the crowded part of the town, I noticed that the people in the street stopped, stared at me, and fell to laughing. I turned round in the saddle, and there was Zany, with a great burdock leaf in his paw, perched up behind me on the crupper, as solemn as a judge.

After a few months, poor Zany sickened mysteriously, and died. The dark thought occurred to me then, and comes back to me now with redoubled force, that Miss Abigail must have given him some hot-drops. Zany left a large circle of sorrowing friends, if not relatives. Gypsy, I think, never entirely recovered from the shock occasioned by his early demise. She became fonder of me, though; and one of her cunningest demonstrations was to escape from the stable-yard, and trot up to the door of the Temple Grammar School, where I would discover her at recess patiently waiting for me, with her fore feet on the second step, and wisps of straw standing out all over her, like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

I should fail if I tried to tell you how dear the pony was to me. Even hard, unloving men become attached to the horses they take care of; so I, who was neither unloving nor hard, grew to love every glossy hair of the pretty little creature that depended on me for her soft straw bed and her daily modicum of oats. In my prayer at night I never forgot to mention Gypsy with the rest

of the family,—generally setting forth her claims first.

Whatever relates to Gypsy belongs properly to this narrative; therefore I offer no apology for rescuing from oblivion, and boldly printing here a short composition which I wrote in the early part of my first quarter at the Temple Grammar School. It is my maiden effort in a difficult art, and is perhaps, lacking in those graces of thought and style which are reached only after the severest practice.

Every Wednesday morning, on entering school, each pupil was expected to lay his exercise on Mr. Grimshaw's desk; the subject was usually selected by Mr. Grimshaw himself, the Monday previous. With a humor characteristic of him, our teacher had instituted two prizes, one for the best and the other for the worst composition of the month. The first prize consisted of a penknife, or a pencil-case, or some such article dear to the heart of youth; the second prize entitled the winner to wear for an hour or two a sort of conical paper cap, on the front of which was written, in tall letters, this modest admission: I AM A DUNCE! The competitor who took prize No. 2 wasn't generally an object of envy.

My pulse beat high with pride and expectation that Wednesday morning, as I laid my essay, neatly folded, on the master's table, I firmly decline to say which prize I won.

It is no small-author vanity that induces me to publish this stray leaf of natural history. I lay it before our young folks, not for their admiration, but for their criticism. Let each reader take his lead-pencil and remorselessly correct the orthography, the capitalization, and the punctuation of the essay. I shall not feel hurt at seeing my treatise cut all to pieces; though I think highly of the production, not on account of its literary excellence, which I candidly admit is not overpowering, but because it was written years and years ago about Gypsy, by a little fellow who, when I strive to recall him, appears to me like a reduced ghost of my present self. Here's the composition to speak for itself:—

The Horse

The horse is a useful animal. He is nice to have - I have one. Her name is gipsy. She likes, her man is very long. one Day it was washing her front foot when she bent down her head and lifted me up by the trousers and tumbled me into the water. She was standing near by, I hit her six times with a piece of hoop - the way of the transgressor is hard.

T. Bailey

I am confident that any reader who has ever had pets, birds or animals, will forgive me for this brief digression.

CHAPTER XII.

WINTER AT RIVERMOUTH.

"I guess we're going to have a regular old-fashioned snow-storm," said Captain Nutter, one bleak December morning, casting a peculiarly nautical glance skyward.

The Captain was always hazarding prophecies about the weather, which somehow never turned out according to his prediction. The vanes on the churchsteeple seemed to take fiendish pleasure in humiliating the dear old gentleman. If he said it was going to be a clear day, a dense sea-fog was pretty certain to set in before noon. Once he caused a protracted drought by assuring us every morning, for six consecutive weeks, that it would rain in a few hours. But, sure enough, that afternoon it began snowing.

Now I had not seen a snow-storm since I was eighteen months old, and of course remembered nothing about it. A boy familiar from his infancy with the rigors of our New England winters can form no idea of the impression made on me by this natural phenomenon. My delight and surprise were as boundless as if the heavy gray sky had let down a shower of pond-lilies and white roses, instead of snow-flakes. It happened to be a half-holiday, so I had nothing to do but watch the feathery crystals whirling hither and thither through the air. I stood by the sitting-room window gazing at the wonder until twilight shut out the novel scene.

We had had several slight flurries of hail and snow before, but this was a regular nor'easter.

Several inches of snow had already fallen. The rose-bushes at the door drooped with the weight of their magical blossoms, and the two posts that held the garden gate were transformed into stately Turks, with white turbans, guarding the entrance to Nutter House.

The storm increased at sundown, and continued with unabated violence through the night. The next morning, when I jumped out of bed, the sun was shining brightly, the cloudless heavens wore the tender azure of June, and the whole earth lay muffled up to the eyes, as it were, in a thick mantle of milk-white down.

It was a very deep snow. The oldest inhabitant (what would become of the new England town or village without its oldest inhabitant?) overhauled his almanacs, and pronounced it the deepest snow we had had for twenty years. It could not have been much deeper without smothering us all. Our street was a sight to be seen, or, rather, it was a sight not to be seen; for very little street was visible. One huge drift completely banked up our front door and half covered my bedroom window.

There was no school that day, for all the thorough-fares were impassible. By twelve o'clock, however, the great snow-ploughs, each drawn by four yokes of oxen, broke a wagon-path through the principal streets; but the foot-passengers had a hard time of it floundering in the arctic drifts.

The Captain and I cut a tunnel, three feet wide and six feet high, from our front door to the sidewalk opposite. It was a beautiful cavern, with its walls and roof inlaid with mother-of-pearl and diamonds. I am sure the ice palace of the Russian Empress, in Cowper's poem, was not a more superb piece of architecture.

The thermometer began falling shortly before sunset, and we had the bitterest cold night I ever experienced. This brought out the Oldest Inhabitant again the next day,—and what a gay old boy he was for deciding everything! Our tunnel was turned into solid ice. A crust thick enough to bear men and horses had formed over the snow everywhere, and the air was alive with merry sleigh bells. Icy stalactites, a yard long, hung from the eaves of the house, and the Turkish sentinels at the gate looked as if they had given up all hopes of ever being relieved from duty.

So the winter set in cold and glittering. Everything out of doors was sheathed in silver mail. To quote from Charley Marden, it was "cold enough to freeze the tail off a brass monkey,"—an observation which seemed to me extremely happy, though I knew little or nothing concerning the endurance of brass monkeys, having never seen one.

I had looked forward to the advent of the season with grave apprehensions, nerving myself to meet dreary nights and monotonous days; but summer itself was not more jolly than winter at Rivermouth. Snow-

balling at school, skating on the Mill Pond coasting by moonlight, long rides behind Gypsy in a brand-new little sleigh built expressly for her, were sports no less exhilarating than those which belonged to the sunny months. And then Thanksgiving! The nose of Memory—why should not Memory have a nose?—dilates with pleasure over the rich perfume of Miss Abigail's forty mince pies, each one more delightful than the other, like the Sultan's forty wives. Christmas was another red-letter day, though it was not so generally observed in New England as it is now.

The great wood-fire in the tiled chimney-place made our sitting-room very cheerful of winter nights. When the north-wind howled above the eaves, and the sharp fingers of the sleet tapped against the window-panes, it was nice to be so warmly sheltered from the storm. A dish of apples and a pitcher of chilly cider were always served during the evening. The Captain had a funny way of leaning back in the chair, and eating his apple with his eyes closed. Sometimes I played dominos with him, and sometimes Miss Abigail read aloud to us, pronouncing "to" *two*, and sounding all the *eds*.

In a former chapter I alluded to Miss Abigail's managing propensities. She had affected many changes in the Nutter House before I came there to live; but there was one thing against which she had long contended without being able to overcome. This was the Captain's pipe. On first taking command of the household, she prohibited smoking in the sitting-room, where it had been the old gentleman's custom to take a whiff or two of the fragrant weed after meals. The edict went forth,—and so did the pipe. An excellent move, no doubt; but then the house was his, and if he saw fit to keep a tub of tobacco burning in the middle of the parlor floor, he had a perfect right to do so. However, he humored her in this as in other matters, and smoked by stealth, like a guilty creature, in the barn, or about the gardens. That was practicable in summer, but in winter the Captain was hard put to it. When he couldn't stand it longer, he retreated to his bedroom and barricaded the door. Such was the position of affairs at the time of which I write.

One morning, a few days after the great snow, as Miss Abigail was dusting the chronometer in the hall, she beheld Captain Nutter slowly descending the staircase, with a long clay pipe in his mouth. Miss Abigail could hardly credit her own eyes.

"Dan'el!" she gasped, retiring heavily on the hat-rack.

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word was uttered failed to produce the slightest effect on the Captain, who merely removed the pipe from his lips for an instant, and blew a cloud into the chilly air. The thermometer stood at two degrees below zero in our hall.

"Dan'el!" cried Miss Abigail, hysterically,—"Dan'el, don't come near me!" Whereupon she fainted away; for the smell of tobacco-smoke always made her deadly sick.

Kitty Collins rushed from the kitchen with a basin of water, and set to work bathing Miss Abigail's temples and chafing her hands. I thought my grandfather rather cruel, as he stood there with a half-smile on his countenance, complacently watching Miss Abigail's sufferings. When she was "brought to," the Captain sat down beside her, and, with a lovely twinkle in his eye, said softly:—

"Abigail, my dear, *there wasn't any tobacco in that pipe!* It was a new pipe. I fetched it down for Tom to blow soap-bubbles with."

At these words Kitty Collins hurried away, her features working strangely. Several minutes later I came upon her in the scullery with the greater portion of a crash towel stuffed into her mouth. "Miss Abigail smelt the *terbacca* with her oil!" cried Kitty, partially removing the cloth, and then immediately stopping herself up again.

The Captain's joke furnished us—that is, Kitty and me—with mirth for many a day; as to Miss Abigail, I think she never wholly pardoned him. After this, Captain Nutter gradually gave up smoking, which is an untidy, injurious, disgraceful and highly pleasant habit.

A boy's life in a secluded New England town in winter does not afford many points for illustration. Of course he gets his ears or toes frost-bitten; of course he smashes his sled against another boy's; of course he bangs his head on the ice; and he's a lad of no enterprise whatever, if he doesn't manage to skate into an eel-hole, and be brought home half drowned. All these things happened to me; but, as they lack novelty, I

pass them over to tell you about the famous snow fort which we built on Slatter's Hill.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SNOW FORT ON SLATTER'S HILL

The memory of man, even that of the Oldest Inhabitant, runneth not back to the time when there did not exist a feud between the North End and the South End boys of Rivermouth.

The origin of the feud is involved in mystery; it is impossible to say which party was the first aggressor in the far-off anti-revolutionary ages; but the fact remains that the youngsters of those antipodal sections entertained a mortal hatred for each other, and that this hatred had been handed down from generation to generation, like Miles Standish's punch-bowl.

I know not what laws, natural or unnatural, regulated the warmth of the quarrel; but at some seasons it raged more violently than at others. This winter both parties were unusually lively and antagonistic. Great was the wrath of the South-Enders, when they discovered that the North-Enders had thrown up a fort on the crown of Slatter's Hill.

Slatter's Hill, or No-man's-land, as it was generally called, was a rise of ground covering, perhaps, an acre and a quarter, situated on an imaginary line, marking the boundary between the two districts. An immense stratum of granite, which here and there thrust out a wrinkled boulder, prevented the site from being used for building purposes. The street ran on either side of the hill, from one part of which a quantity of rock had been removed to form the underpinning of the new jail. This excavation made the approach from that point all but impossible, especially when the ragged ledges were a-glitter with ice. You see what a spot it was for a snow-fort.

One evening twenty or thirty of the North-Enders quietly took possession of Slatter's Hill, and threw up a strong line of breast-works, something after this shape:—



The rear of the intrenchment, being protected by the quarry, was left open. The walls were four feet high, and twenty-two inches thick, strengthened at the angles by stakes driven firmly into the ground.

Fancy the rage of the South-Enders the next day, when they spied our snowy citadel, with Jack Harris's red silk pocket-handkerchief floating defiantly from the flagstaff.

In less than an hour it was known all over

town, in military circles at least, that the "Puddle-dockers" and the "River-rats" (these were the derisive sub-titles bestowed on our South-End foes) intended to attack the fort that Saturday afternoon.

At two o'clock all the fighting boys of the Temple Grammar School, and as many recruits as we could muster, lay behind the walls of Fort Slatter, with three hundred compact snow-balls piled up in pyramids awaiting the approach of the enemy. The enemy was not slow in making its approach, —fifty strong, headed by one Mat Ames. Our forces were under the command of General J. Harris.

Before the action commenced, a meeting was arranged between the rival commanders, who drew up and signed certain regulations respecting the conduct of the battle. As it was impossible for the North-Enders to occupy the fort permanently, it was stipulated that the South-Enders should assault it only on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons between the hours of two and six. For them to take possession of the place at any other time was not to constitute a capture, but on the contrary was to be considered a dishonorable and cowardly act.

The North-Enders, on the other hand, agreed to give up the fort whenever ten of the stormy party succeeded in obtaining at one time a footing on the parapet, and were able to hold the same for the space of two minutes. Both sides were to abstain from putting pebbles into their snow-balls, nor was it permissible to use frozen ammunition. A snow-ball soaked in water and left out to cool was a projectile which in previous years had been resorted to with disastrous results.

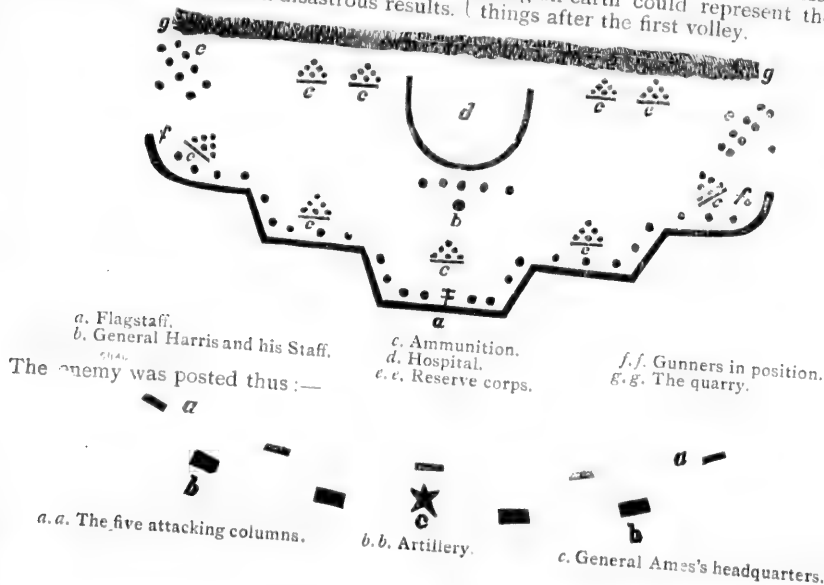
These preliminaries settled, the commanders retired to their respective corps. The interview had taken place on the hillside between the opposing lines.

General Harris divided his men into two bodies; the first comprised the most skilful marksmen, or gunners; the second, the reserve force, was composed of the strongest boys, whose duty it was to repel the scaling parties, and to make occasional sallies for the purpose of capturing prisoners, who were bound by the articles of treaty to faithfully serve under our flag until they were exchanged at the close of the day.

The repellers were called light infantry; but when they carried on operations beyond the fort they became cavalry. It was also their duty, when not otherwise engaged, to manufacture snow-ball. The General's staff consisted of five Templars (I among the number, with the rank of Major), who carried the General's orders and looked after the wounded.

General Mat Ames, a veteran commander, was no less wide-awake in the disposition of his army. Five companies, each numbering but six men, in order not to present too big a target to our sharpshooters, were to charge the fort from different points, their advance being covered by a heavy fire from the gunners posted in the rear. Each scaler was provided with only two rounds of ammunition, which were not to be used until he had mounted the breastwork and could deliver his shots on our heads.

The following cut represents the interior of the fort just previous to the assault. Nothing on earth could represent the state of things after the first volley.



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The thrilling moment had now arrived. If I had been going into a real engagement I could not have been more deeply impressed by the importance of the occasion.

The fort opened fire first, -- a single ball from the dexterous hand of General Harris taking General Ames in the very pit of his stomach. A cheer went up from Fort Slatter. In an instant the air was thick with flying missiles, in the midst of which we dimly descried the storming parties sweeping up the hill, shoulder to shoulder. The shouts of the leaders, and the snow-balls bursting like shells about our ears, made it very lively.

Not more than a dozen of the enemy succeeded in reaching the crest of the hill: five of these clambered upon the icy walls, where they were instantly grabbed by the legs and jerked into the fort. The rest retired confused and blinded by our well-directed fire.

When General Harris (with his right eye bunged up) said, "Soldiers, I am proud of you!" my heart swelled in my bosom.

The victory, however, had not been without its price. Six North-Enders, having rushed out to harass the discomfited enemy, were gallantly cut off by General Ames and captured. Among these were Lieutenant P. Whitcomb (who had no business to join in the charge, being weak in the knees), and Captain Fred Langdon, of General Harris's staff. Whitcomb was one of the most notable shots on our side, though he was not much to boast of in a rough-and-tumble fight, owing to the weakness before mentioned. General Ames put him among the gunners, and we were quickly made aware of the loss we had sustained, by receiving a frequent artful ball which seemed to light with unerring instinct on any nose that was the least bit exposed. I have known one of Pepper's snow-balls, fired point-blank, to turn a corner and hit a boy who considered himself absolutely safe.

But we had no time for vain regrets. The battle raged. Already there were two bad cases of black eye, and one of nose-bleed, in the hospital.

It was glorious excitement, those pell-mell onslaughts and hand-to-hand struggles. Twice we were within an ace of being driven from our stronghold, when General Harris and his staff leaped recklessly upon the ramparts and hurled the besiegers heels over head down hill.

At sunset, the garrison of Fort Slatter was still unconquered, and the South-Enders, in a solid phalanx, marched off whistling "Yankee Doodle," while we cheered and jeered them until they were out of hearing.

General Ames remained behind to effect an exchange of prisoners. We held thirteen of his men, and he eleven of ours. General Ames proposed to call it an even thing, since many of his eleven prisoners were officers, while nearly all our thirteen captives were privates. A dispute arising on this point, the two noble generals came to fist-cuffs, and in the fracas our brave commander got his remaining well eye badly damaged. This didn't prevent him from writing a general order the next day, on a slate, in which he complimented the troops on their heroic behavior.

On the following Wednesday the siege was renewed. I forget whether it was on that afternoon or the next that we lost Fort Slatter; but lose it we did, with much valuable ammunition and several men. After a series of desperate assaults, we forced General Ames to capitulate; and he, in turn, made the place too hot to hold us. So from day to day the tide of battle surged to and fro, sometimes favoring our arms, and sometimes those of the enemy.

General Ames handled his men with great skill; his deadliest foe could not deny that. Once he out-generalled our commander in the following manner: He massed his gunners on our left and opened a brisk fire, under cover of which a single company (six men) advanced on that angle of the fort. Our reserves on the right rushed over to defend the threatened point. Meanwhile, four companies of the enemy's scalers made a *detour* round the foot of the hill, and dashed into Fort Slatter without opposition. At the same moment General Ames's gunners closed in on our left, and there we were between two fires. Of course we had to vacate the fort. A cloud rested on General Harris's military reputation until his superior tactics enabled him to dispossess the enemy.

As the winter wore on, the war-spirit waxed firmer and fiercer. At length the provision against using heavy substances in the snow-balls was disregarded. A ball stuck full of sand-bird shot came tearing into Fort Slatter. In retaliation, General Harris ordered a broadside of shell; i. e. snow-balls containing marbles. After this, both sides never failed to freeze their ammunition.

It was no longer child's play to march up to the walls of Fort Slatter, nor was the position of the besieged less perilous. At every assault three or four boys on each side were disabled. It was not an infrequent occurrence for the combatants to hold up a flag of truce while they removed some insensible comrade.

Matters grew worse and worse! Seven North-Enders had been seriously wounded,

and a dozen South-Enders were reported on the sick list. The selectmen of the town awoke to the fact of what was going on, and detailed a *posse* of police to prevent further disturbance. The boys at the foot of the hill, South-Enders as it happened, finding themselves assailed in the rear and on the flank, turned round and attempted to beat off the watchmen. In this they were sustained by numerous volunteers from the fort, who looked upon the interference as tyrannical.

The watch were determined fellows, and charged the boys valiantly, driving them all into the fort, where we made common cause, fighting side by side like the best of friends. In vain the four guardians of the peace rushed up the hill, flourishing their clubs and calling upon us to surrender. They could not get within ten yards of the fort, our fire was so destructive. In one of the onsets a man named Mugridge, more valorous than his peers, threw himself upon the parapet, when he was seized by twenty pairs of hands, and dragged inside the breast-work, where fifteen boys sat down on him to keep him quiet.

Perceiving that it was impossible with their small number to dislodge us, the watch sent for reinforcements. Their call was responded to, not only by the whole constabulary force (eight men), but by a numerous body of citizens, who had become alarmed at the prospect of a riot. This formidable array brought us to our senses: we began to think that maybe discretion was the better part of valor. General Harris and General Ames, with their respective staffs, held a council of war in the hospital, and a backward movement was decided on. So, after one grand farewell volley, we fled, sliding, jumping, rolling, tumbling down the quarry at the rear of the fort, and escaped without losing a man.

But we lost Fort Slatter forever. Those battle-scarred ramparts were razed to the ground, and humiliating ashes sprinkled over the historic spot, near which a solitary lynx-eyed policeman was seen prowling from time to time during the rest of the winter.

The event passed into a legend, and afterwards, when later instances of pluck and endurance were spoken of, the boys would say, "By golly! you ought to have been at the fights on Slatter's Hill!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CRUISE OF THE DOLPHIN.

It was spring again. The snow had faded away like a dream, and we were awakened, so to speak, by the sudden chirping of robins

in our back garden. Marvellous transformation of snow-drifts into lilacs, wondrous miracle of the unfolding leaf! We read in the Holy Book how our Saviour, at the marriage feast, changed the water into wine; we pause and wonder; but every hour a greater miracle is wrought at our very feet, if we have but eyes to see it.

I had now been a year at Rivermouth. If you do not know what sort of boy I was, it is not because I have n't been frank with you. Of my progress at school I say little: for this is a story, pure and simple, and not a treatise on education. Behold me, however, well up in most of the classes. I have worn my Latin grammar into tatters, and am in the first book of Virgil. I interlard my conversation at home with easy quotations from that poet, and impress Captain Nutter with a lofty notion of my learning. I am likewise translating *Les Aventures de Telemaque* from the French, and shall tackle Blair's *Lectures* the next term. I am ashamed of my crude composition about *The Horse*, and can do better now. Sometimes my head almost aches with the variety of my knowledge. I consider Mr. Grimshaw the greatest scholar that ever lived, and I don't know which I would rather be,—a learned man like him, or a circus-rider.

My thoughts revert to this particular spring more frequently than to any other period of my boyhood, for it was marked by an event that left an indelible impression on my memory. As I pen these pages, I feel that I am writing of something which happened yesterday, so vividly it all comes back to me.

Every Rivermouth boy looks upon the sea as being in some way mixed up with his destiny. While he is yet a baby lying in his cradle, he hears the dull, far-off boom of the breakers: when he is older, he wanders by the sandy shore, watching the waves that come plunging up the beach like white-manned sea-horses, as Thoreau calls them; his eye follows the lessening sail as it fades into the blue horizon, and he burns for the time when he shall stand on the quarter-deck of his own ship, and go sailing proudly across that mysterious waste of waters.

Then the town itself is full of hints and flavors of the sea. The gables and roofs of the houses facing eastward are covered with red rust, like the flukes of old anchors; a salty smell pervades the air, and dense gray fogs, the very breath of Ocean, periodically creep up into the quiet streets and envelop everything. The terrific storms that lash the coast; the kelp and spars, and sometimes the bodies of drowned men, tossed on shore by the scornful waves; the shipyards, the wharves, and the tawny fleet of fishing-

We unshipped the mast, threw in an extra oar, and were ready to embark. I do not

believe that Christopher Columbus, when he started on his rather successful voyage of discovery, felt half the responsibility and importance that weighed upon me as I sat on the middle seat of the Dolphin, with my oar resting in the row-lock. I wonder if Christopher Columbus quietly slipped out of the house without letting his estimable family know what he was up to?

Charley Marden, whose father had promised to cane him if he ever stepped foot on sail or row boat, came down to the wharf in a sour-grape humor, to see us off. Nothing would tempt him to go out on the river in such a crazy clam-shell of a boat. He pretended that he did not expect to behold us alive again, and tried to throw a wet blanket over the expedition.

"Guess you 'll have a squally time of it," said Charley, casting off the painter. "I'll drop in at old Newbury's" (Newbury was the parish undertaker) "and leave word, as I go along!"

"Bosh!" muttered Phil Adams, sticking the boat-hook into the string-piece of the wharf, and sending the Dolphin half a dozen yards towards the current.

How calm and lovely the river was! Not a ripple stirred on the glassy surface, broken only by the sharp cutwater of our tiny craft. The sun, as round and red as an August moon, was by this time peering above the water-line.

The town had drifted behind us, and we were entering among the group of islands. Sometimes we could almost touch with our boat-hook the shelving banks on either side. As we neared the mouth of the harbor, a little breeze now and then wrinkled the blue water, shook the spangles from the foliage, and gently lifted the spiral mist-wreaths that still clung along shore. The measured dip of our oars and the drowsy twitterings of the birds seemed to mingle with, rather than break the enchanted silence that reigned above us.

The scent of the new clover comes back to me now, as I recall that delicious morning when we floated away in a fairy boat down a river like a dream!

The sun was well up when the nose of the Dolphin nestled against the snow-white bosom of Sandpeep Island. This island, as I have said before, was the last of the cluster, one side of it being washed by the sea. We landed on the river side, the slop-sands and quiet water affording us a good place to moor the boat.

It took us an hour or two to transport our stores to the spot selected for the encampment. Having pitched our tent, using the five oars to support the canvas, we got out our lines, and went down the rocks,

seaward to fish. It was early for cunners but we were lucky enough to catch as nice mess as ever you saw. A cod for the chowder was not so easily secured. At last Binny Wallace hauled in a plump little fellow crusted all over with flake silver.

To skin the fish, build our fireplace, and cook the chowder kept us busy the next two hours. The fresh air and the exercise had given us the appetites of wolves, and we were about famished by the time the savory mixture was ready for our clam-shell saucers.

I shall not insult the rising generation on the seaboard by telling them how delectable is a chowder compounded and eaten in this Robinson Crusoe fashion. As for the boys who live inland, and know naught of such marine feasts, my heart is full of pity for them. What wasted lives! Not to know the delights of a clam-bake, not to love chowder, to be ignorant of lob-scouse!

How happy we were, we four, sitting cross-legged in the crisp salt grass, with the invigorating sea-breeze blowing gratefully through our hair! What a joyous thing was life, and how far off seemed death,—death, that lurks in all pleasant places, and was so near!

The banquet finished, Phil Adams drew from his pocket a handful of sweet-fern cigars; but as none of the party could indulge without imminent risk of becoming sick, we all, on one pretext or another, declined, and Phil smoked by himself.

The wind had freshened by this, and we found it comfortable to put on the jackets which had been thrown aside in the heat of the day. We strolled along the beach and gathered large quantities of the fairy-woven Iceland moss, which, at certain seasons, is washed to these shores; then we played at ducks and drakes, and then, the sun being sufficiently low, we went in bathing.

Before our bath was ended a slight change had come over the sky and sea; fleecy-white clouds scudded here and there, and a muffled moan from the breakers caught our ears from time to time. While we were dressing, a few hurried drops of rain came lipping down, and we adjourned to the tent to await the passing of the squall.

"We 're all right, anyhow," said Phil Adams. "It won't be much of a blow, and we 'll be as snug as a bug in a rug, here in the tent, particularly if we have that lemonade which some of you fellows were going to make."

By an oversight, the lemons had been left in the boat. Binny Wallace volunteered to go for them.

"Put an extra stone on the painter, Binny," said Adams, calling after him; "it would be awkward, to have the Dolphin give

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"That it would," answered Binny, scrambling down the rocks.

Sandpeep Island is a diamond-shaped,—one point running out into the sea, and the other looking towards the town. Our tent was on the river-side. Through the Dolphin was also on the same side, it lay out of sight by the beach at the farther extremity of the island.

Binny Wallace had been absent five or six minutes, when we heard him calling our several names in tones that indicated distress or surprise, we could not tell which. Our first thought was, "The boat has broken adrift!"

We sprang to our feet and hastened down to the beach. On turning the bluff which hid the mooring-place from our view, we found the conjecture correct. Not only was the Dolphin afloat, but poor little Binny Wallace was standing in the bows with his arms stretched helplessly towards us,—
drifting out to sea!

"Head the boat in shore!" shouted Phil Adams.

Wallace ran to the tiller; but the slight cockle-shell merely swung round and drifted broadside on. O, if we had but a single scull in the Dolphin!"

"Can you swim it?" cried Adams, desperately, using his hand as a speaking-trumpet, for the distance between the boat and the island widened momentarily.

Binny Wallace looked down at the sea, which was covered with white caps, and made a despairing gesture. He knew, and we knew, that the stoutest swimmer could not live forty seconds in those angry waters.

A wild, insane light came into Phil Adams' eyes, as he stood knee-deep in the boiling surf, and for an instant I think he meditated plunging into the ocean after the receding boat.

The sky darkened, and an ugly look stole rapidly over the broken surface of the sea.

Binny Wallace half rose from his seat in the stern, and waved his hand to us in token of farewell. In spite of the distance, increasing every instant, we could see his face plainly. The anxious expression it wore at first had passed. It was pale and meek now, and I love to think there was a kind of halo about it, like that which painters place around the forehead of a saint. So he drifted away.

The sky grew darker and darker. It was only by straining our eyes through the unnatural twilight that we could keep the Dolphin in sight. The figure of Binny Wallace was no longer visible, for the boat itself had dwindled to a mere white dot on the black

water. Now we lost it, and our hearts stopped throbbing; and now the speck appeared again, for an instant, on the crest of a high wave.

Finally, it went out like a spark and we saw it no more. Then we gazed at each other, and dared not speak.

Absorbed in following the course of the boat, we had scarcely noticed the huddled inky clouds that sagged down all around us. From these threatening masses, seamed at intervals with pale lightning, there now burst a heavy peal of thunder that shook the ground under our feet. A sudden squall struck the sea, ploughing deep white furrows into it, and at the same instant a single piercing shriek rose above the tempest,—the frightened cry of a gull swooping over the island. How it startled us!

It was impossible any longer to keep our footing on the beach. The wind and the breakers would have swept us into the ocean if we had not clung to each other with the desperation of drowning men. Taking advantage of a momentary lull, we crawled up the sands on our hands and knees, and, pausing in the lee of the granite ledge to gain breath, returned to the camp, where we found that the gale had snapped all the fastenings of the tent but one. Held by this, the puffed-out canvas swayed in the wind like a balloon. It was a task of some difficulty to secure it, which we did by beating down the canvas with the oars.

After several trials, we succeeded in setting up the tent on the leeward side of the ledge. Blinded by the vivid flashes of lightning, and drenched by the rain, which fell in torrents, we crept, half dead with fear and anguish, under our flimsy shelter. Neither the anguish nor the fear was on our own account, for we were comparatively safe, but for poor little Binny Wallace, driven out to sea in the merciless gale. We shuddered to think of him in that frail shell, drifting on and on to his grave, the sky rent with lightning over his head, and the green abysses yawning beneath him. We fell to crying, the three of us, and cried I know not how long.

Meanwhile the storm raged with augmented fury. We were obliged to hold on to the ropes of the tent to prevent it blowing away. The spray from the river leaped several yards up the rocks and clutched at us malignantly. The very island trembled with the convulsions of the sea beating upon it, and at times I fancied that it had broken loose from its foundation, and was floating off with us. The breakers, streaked with angry phosphorous, were fearful to look at.

The wind rose higher and higher, cutting

long slits in the tent, through which the rain poured incessantly. To complete the sum of our miseries, the night was at hand. It came down suddenly, at last, like a curtain, shutting in Sandpeep Island from all the world.

It was a dirty night, as the sailors say. The darkness was something that could be felt as well as seen,—it pressed down upon one with a cold, clammy touch. Gazing into the hollow blackness, all sorts of imaginable shapes seemed to start forth from vacancy,—brilliant colors, stars, prisms, and dancing lights. What boy, lying awake at night, has not amused or terrified himself by peopling the spaces around his bed with these phenomena of his own eyes?

"I say," whispered Fred Langdon, at length, clutching my hand, "don't you see things—out there—in the dark?"

"Yes, yes,—Binny Wallace's face!"

I added to my own nervousness by making this avowal; though for the last ten minutes I had seen little besides that star-pale face with its angelic hair and brows. First a slim yellow circle, like the nimbus round the moon, took shape and grew sharp against the darkness; then this faded gradually, and there was the Face, wearing the same sad, sweet look it wore when he waved his hand to us across the awful water. This optical illusion kept repeating itself.

"And I too," said Adams. "I see it every now and then, outside there. What would n't I give if it really was poor little Wallace looking in at us! Oh boys, how shall we dare to go back to the town without him? I've wished a hundred times, since we've been sitting here, that I was in his place, alive or dead!"

We dreaded the approach of morning as much as we longed for it. The morning would tell us all. Was it possible for the Dolphin to outride such a storm? There was a light-house on Mackerel Reef, which lay directly in the course the boat had taken, when it disappeared. If the Dolphin had caught on this reef, perhaps Binny Wallace was safe. Perhaps his cries had been heard by the keeper of the light. The man owned a life-boat, and had rescued several people. Who could tell?

Such were the questions we asked ourselves again and again, as we lay in each other's arms waiting for daybreak. What an endless night it was! I have known months that did not seem so long.

Our position was irksome rather than perilous; for the day was certain to bring us relief from the town, where our prolonged absence, together with the storm, had no doubt excited the liveliest alarm for our

safety. But the cold, the darkness, and the suspense were hard to bear.

Our soaked jackets had chilled us to the bone. To keep warm, we lay huddled together so closely that we could hear our hearts beat above the tumult of sea and sky.

After a while we grew very hungry, not having broken our fast since early in the day. The rain had turned the hard-tack into a sort of dough; but it was better than nothing.

We used to laugh at Fred Langdon for always carrying in his pocket a small vial of essence of peppermint or sassafras, a few drops of which, sprinkled on a lump of loaf-sugar, he seemed to consider a great luxury. I don't know what would have become of us at this crisis, if it had n't been for that omnipresent bottle of hot stuff. We poured the stinging liquid over our sugar, which had kept dry in a sardine-box, and warmed ourselves with frequent doses.

After four or five hours the rain ceased, the wind died away to a moan, and the sea—no longer raging like a maniac—sobbed and sobbed with a piteous human voice all along the coast. And well it might, after that night's work. Twelve sail of the Gloucester fishing fleet had gone down with every soul on board, just outside of Whales-back light. Think of the wide grief that follows in the wake of one wreck; then think of the despairing women who wrung their hands and wept, the next morning, in the streets of Gloucester, Marblehead, and New-castle!

Though our strength was nearly spent, we were too cold to sleep. Once I sunk into a troubled doze, when I seemed to hear Charley Marden's parting words, only it was the Sea that said them. After that I threw off the drowsiness whenever it threatened to overcome me.

Fred Langdon was the first to discover a filmy, luminous streak in the sky, the first glimmering of sunrise.

"Look, it is nearly daybreak!"

While we were following the direction of his finger, a sound of distant oars fell on our ears.

We listened breathlessly, and as the dip of the blades became more audible, we discerned two foggy lights, like will-o'-the-wisps, floating on the river.

Running down to the water's edge, we hailed the boats with all our might. The call was heard, for the oars rested a moment in the row-lock, and then pulled in towards the island.

It was two boats from the town, in the foremost of which we could now make out the figures of Captain Nutter and Binny

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or sassafras, a few
on a lump of loaf-
der a great luxury.
d have become of
n't been for that
stuff. We poured
our sugar, which
pox, and warmed
ses.

s the rain ceased.
oan, and the sea
maniac—sobbed
human voice all
l it might, after
lve sail of the
gone down with
tside of Whales-
wide grief that
reck; then think
who wrung their
morning, in the
thead, and New-

early spent, we
ce I sunk into a
d to hear Char-
only it was the
hat I threw off
threatened to

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e sky, the first

nk!"
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bars fell on our

d as the dip of
le, we discern-
ll-o-the-wisps,

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ight. The call
a moment in
n towards the

town, in the
ow make out
and Binny

Wallace's father. We shrunk back on seeing
him.

"Thank God!" cried Mr. Wallace, fer-
vently, as he leaped from the wherry without
waiting for the bow to touch the beach.

But when he saw only three boys standing
on the sands, his eye wandered restlessly
about in quest of the fourth; then a deadly
pallor overspread his features.

Our story was soon told. A solemn silence
fell upon the crowd of rough boatmen gath-
ered round, interrupted only by a stifled sob
from one poor old man, who stood apart from
the rest.

The sea was still running too high for any
small boat to venture out; so it was arranged
that the wherry should take us back to town,
leaving the yawl, with a picked crew, to hug
the island until daybreak, and then set forth
in search of the Dolphin.

Though it was barely sunrise when we
reached town, there were a great many peo-
ple assembled at the landing eager for intel-
ligence from missing boats. Two picnic
parties had started down river the day be-
fore, just previous to the gale, and nothing
had been heard of them. It turned out that
the pleasure-seekers saw their danger in
time, and ran ashore on one of the least ex-
posed islands, where they passed the night.
Shortly after our own arrival they appeared
off Rivermouth, much to the joy of their
friends, in two shattered, dismasted boats.

The excitement over. I was in a forlorn
state, physically and mentally. Captain
Nutter put me to bed between hot blankets,
and sent Kitty Collins for the doctor. I was
wandering in my mind, and fancied myself still
on Sandpeep Island; now we were building
our brick-stove to cook the chowder, and,
in my delirium, I laughed aloud and shouted
to my comrades; now the sky darkened, and
the squall struck the island; now I gave
orders to Wallace how to manage the boat,
and now I cried because the rain was pour-
ing in on me through the holes in the tent.
Towards evening a high fever set in, and it
was many days before my grandfather
deemed it prudent to tell me that the Dol-
phin had been found, floating keel upwards,
four miles southeast of Mackerel Reef.

Poor little Binny Wallace! How strange
it seemed, when I went to school again, to
see that empty seat in the fifth row! How
gloomy the playground was, lacking the sun-
shine of his gentle, sensitive face! One day
a folded sheet slipped from my algebra; it
was the last note he ever wrote me. I
could n't read it for the tears.

What a pang shot across my heart the
afternoon it was whispered through the town
that a body had been washed ashore at
Grave Point,—the place where we bathed.

We bathed there no more! How well I
remember the funeral, and what a piteous
sight it was afterwards to see his familiar
name on a small headstone in the Old South
Burying Ground!

Poor little Binny Wallace! Always the
same to me. The rest of us have grown up
into hard, worldly men, fighting the fight of
life; but you are forever young, and gentle,
and pure; a part of my own childhood that
time cannot whither; always a little boy,
always poor little Binny Wallace!

CHAPTER XV.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE TURNS UP.

A year had stolen by since the death of
Binny Wallace,—a year of which I have
nothing important to record.

The loss of our little playmate threw a
shadow over our young lives for many and
many a month. The Dolphin rose and fell
with the tide at the foot of the slippery steps,
unused, the rest of the summer. At the
close of November we hauled her sadly into
the boat-house for the winter; but when the
spring came round we launched the Dolphin
again, and often went down to the wharf
and looked at her lying in the tangled eel-
grass, without much inclination to take a
row. The associations connected with the
boat were too painful as yet; but time, which
wears the sharp edge from everything,
softened this feeling, and one afternoon we
brought out the cobwebbed oars.

The ice once broken, brief trips along the
wharves—we seldom cared to go out into
the river now—became one of our chief
amusements. Meanwhile Gypsy was not
forgotten. Every clear morning I was in
the saddle before breakfast, and there are
few roads or lanes within ten miles of River-
mouth that have not born the print of her
vagrant hoof.

I studied like a good fellow this quarter,
carrying off a couple of first prizes. The
Captain expressed his gratification by pre-
senting me with a new silver dollar. If a
dollar in his eyes was smaller than a car-
wheel, it was not so very much smaller. I re-
deemed my pencil-case from the treasurer of
the Centipedes, and felt that I was getting on
in the world.

It was at this time I was greatly cast down
by a letter from my father saying that he
should be unable to visit Rivermouth until
the following year. With that letter came
another to Captain Nutter, which he did not
read aloud to the family, as usual. It was
on business, he said, folding it up in his
wallet. He received several of these business
letters from time to time, and I noticed

that they always made him silent and moody.

The fact is, my father's banking-house was not thriving. The unlooked-for failure of a firm largely indebted to him had crippled "the house." When the Captain imparted this information to me I did not trouble myself over the matter. I suppose—if I supposed anything—that all grown-up people had more or less money, when they wanted it. Whether they inherited it, or whether government supplied them, was not clear to me. A loose idea that my father had a private gold-mine somewhere or other relieved me of all uneasiness.

I was not far from right. Every man has within himself a gold-mine whose riches are limited only by his own industry. It is true, it sometimes happens that industry does not avail, if a man lacks that something which, for want of a better name, we call Luck. My father was a person of untiring energy and ability; but he had no luck. To use a Rivermouth saying, he was always catching sculpins when every one else with the same bait was catching mackerel.

It was more than two years since I had seen my parents. I felt that I could not bear a longer separation. Every letter from New Orleans—we got two or three a month—gave me a fit of homesickness; and when it was definitely settled that my father and mother were to remain in the South another twelvemonth, I resolved to go to them.

Since Binny Wallace's death, Pepper Whitcomb had been my *fidus Achates*; we occupied desks near each other at school, and were always together in play hours. We rigged a twine telegraph from his garret window to the scuttle of the Nutter House, and sent messages to each other in a match-box. We shared our pocket-money and our secrets,—those amazing secrets which boys have. We met in lonely places by stealth, and parted like conspirators; we couldn't buy a jackknife or build a kite without throwing an air of mystery and guilt over the transaction.

I naturally hastened to lay my New Orleans project before Pepper Whitcomb, having dragged him for that purpose to a secluded spot in the dark pine woods outside the town. Pepper listened to me with a gravity which he will not be able to surpass when he becomes Chief Justice, and strongly advised me to go.

"The summer vacation," said Pepper, "lasts six weeks; that will give you a fortnight to spend in New Orleans, allowing two weeks each way for the journey."

I wrung his hand and begged him to ac-

company me, offering to defray all expenses. I wasn't anything if I was princely in those days. After considering, he consented to go on terms liberal. The whole thing was arranged there was nothing to do now but to advise Captain Nutter of my plan, which I did the next day.

The possibility that he might oppose the tour never entered my head. I was therefore totally unprepared for the vigorous negative which met my proposal. I was deeply mortified, moreover, for there was Pepper Whitcomb on the wharf, at the foot of the street, waiting for me to come and let him know what day we were to start.

"Go to New Orleans? Go to Jericho!" exclaimed Captain Nutter. "You'd lose pretty, you two, philandering off, like the bales in the wood, twenty-five hundred miles, 'with all the world before you when to choose'!"

And the Captain's features, which had worn an indignant air as he began the sentence, relaxed into a broad smile. Whether it was at the felicity of his own quotation or at the mental picture he drew of Pepper and myself on our travels I couldn't tell, and I didn't care. I was heart-broken. How could I face my chum after all the dazzling inducements I had held out to him?

My grandfather, seeing that I took the matter seriously, pointed out the difficulties of such a journey and the great expense involved. He entered into the details of my father's money troubles, and succeeded in making it plain to me that my wishes, under the circumstances, were somewhat unreasonable. It was in no cheerful mood that I joined Pepper at the end of the wharf.

I found that young gentleman leaning against the bulkhead gazing intently towards the islands in the harbor. He had formed a telescope of his hands, and was so occupied with his observations as to be oblivious of my approach.

"Hullo!" cried Pepper, dropping his hands. "Look there! isn't that a bark coming up the Narrows?"

"Where?"

"Just at the left of Fishcrate Island. Don't you see the foremast peeping above the old derrick?"

Sure enough it was a vessel of considerable size, slowly beating up to town. In a few moments more the other two masts were visible above the green hillocks.

"Fore-topmasts blown away," said Pepper. "Putting in for repairs, I guess."

As the bark lazily crept from behind the last of the islands, she let go her anchors

and swung round with the tide. Then the gleeful chant of the sailors at the capstan came to us pleasantly across the water. The vessel lay within three quarters of a mile of us, and we could plainly see the men at the davits lowering the starboard long-boat. It no sooner touched the stream than a dozen of the crew scrambled like mice over the side of the merchantman.

In a neglected seaport like Rivermouth the arrival of a large ship is an event of moment. The prospect of having twenty or thirty jolly tars let loose on the peaceful town excites divers emotions among the inhabitants. The small shopkeepers along the wharves anticipated a thriving trade; the proprietors of the two rival boarding-houses—the "Wee Drop" and the "Mariner's Home"—hasten down to the landing to secure lodgers; and the female population of Anchor Lane turn out to a woman, for a ship fresh from sea is always full of possible husbands and long-lost prodigal sons.

But aside from this there is scant welcome given to a ship's crew in Rivermouth. The toil-worn mariner is a sad fellow ashore, judging him by a severe moral standard.

Once, I remember, a United States frigate came into port for repairs after a storm. She lay in the river a fortnight or more, and every day sent us a gang of sixty or seventy of our country's gallant defenders, who spread themselves over the town, doing all sorts of mad things. They were good-natured enough, but full of old Sancho. The "Wee Drop" proved a drop too much for many of them. They went singing through the streets at midnight, wringing off door-knockers, shinning up water-spouts, and frightening the Oldest Inhabitant nearly to death by popping their heads into his second-story window, and shouting, "Fire!" One morning a blue jacket was discovered in a perilous plight, half-way up the steeple of the South Church, clinging to the lightning-rod. How he got there nobody could tell, not even blue-jacket himself. All he knew was, that the leg of his trousers had caught on a nail, and there he stuck, unable to move either way. It cost the town twenty dollars to get him down again. He directed the workmen how to splice the ladders brought to his assistance, and called his rescuers "butter-fingered land-lubbers" with delicious coolness.

But those were man-of-war's men. The sedate-looking craft now lying off Fish-plate Island was n't likely to carry any such cargo. Nevertheless, we watched the coming in of the long-boat with considerable interest.

As it drew near, the figure of the man

pulling the bow-oar seemed oddly familiar to me. Where could I have seen him before? When and where? His back was towards me, but there was something about that closely cropped head that I recognized instantly.

"Way enough!" cried the steersman, and all the oars stood upright in the air. The man in the bow seized the boat-hook, and turning round quickly, showed me the honest face of Sailor Ben of the Typhoon.

"It's Sailor Ben!" I cried, nearly pushing Pepper Whitcomb overboard in my excitement.

Sailor Ben, with the wonderful pink lady on his arm, and the ships and stars and anchors tattooed all over him, was a well-known hero among my playmates. And there he was, like something in a dream come true!

I didn't wait for my old acquaintance to get firmly on the wharf, before I grasped his hand in both of mine.

"Sailor Ben, don't you remember me?" He evidently did not. He shifted his quid from one cheek to the other, and looked at me meditatively.

"Lord love ye, lad, I don't know you. I was never here afore in my life."

"What!" I cried, enjoying his perplexity, "have you forgotten the voyage from New Orleans in the Typhoon, two years ago, you lovely old picture-book?"

Ah! then he knew me, and in token of the recollection gave my hand such a squeeze that I am sure an unpleasant change came over my countenance.

"Bless my eyes, but you have growed so. I shouldn't have knowed you if I had met you in Singapore!"

Without stopping to inquire, as I was tempted to do, why he was more likely to recognize me in Singapore than anywhere else, I invited him to come at once up to the Nutter House, where I insured him a warm welcome from the Captain.

"Hold steady, Master Tom," said Sailor Ben, slipping the painter through the ring-bolt and tying the loveliest knot you ever saw; "hold steady till I see if the mate can let me off. If you please, sir," he continued, addressing the steersman, a very red-faced, bow-legged person, "this here is a little shipmate o' mine as wants to talk over back times, along of me, if so it's convenient."

"All right, Ben," returned the mate; "sha'n't want you for an hour."

Leaving one man in charge of the boat, the mate and the rest of the crew went off together. In the meanwhile Pepper Whitcomb had got out his cunner-line, and was quietly fishing at the end of the wharf, as if to give me the idea that he wasn't so very

much impressed by intimacy with so renowned a character as Sailor Ben. Perhaps Pepper was a little jealous. At any rate, he refused to go with us to the house.

Captain Nutter was at home reading the Rivermouth Barnacle. He was a reader to do an editor's heart good; he never skipped over an advertisement, even if he had read it fifty times before. Then the paper went the rounds of the neighborhood, among the poor people, like the single portable eye which the three blind crones passed to each other in the legend of King Acrius. The Captain, I repeat, was wandering in the labyrinths of the Rivermouth Barnacle when I led Sailor Ben into the sitting-room.

My grandfather, whose inborn courtesies knew no distinctions, received my nautical friend as if he had been an admiral instead of a common forecabin hand. Sailor Ben pulled an imaginary tuft of hair on his forehead, and bowed clumsily. Sailors have a way of using their forelock as a sort of handle to bow with.

The old tar had probably never been in so handsome an apartment in all his days, and nothing could induce him to take the inviting mahogany chair which the Captain wheeled out from the corner.

The abashed mariner stood up against the wall, twirling his tarpaulin in his two hands and looking extremely silly. He made a poor show in a gentleman's drawing-room, but what a fellow he had been in his day, when the gale blew guns and the topsails wanted reefing! I thought of him with the Mexican squadroon off Vera Cruz, where

"The rushing battle-bolt sung from the three-decker out of the foam,"

and he didn't seem awkward or ignoble to me, for all his shyness.

As Sailor Ben declined to sit down, the Captain did not resume his seat; so we three stood in a constrained manner until my grandfather went to the door and called to Kitty to bring in a decanter of Madeira and two glasses.

"My grandson, here, has talked so much about you," said the Captain, pleasantly, "that you seem quite like an old acquaintance to me."

"Thankee, sir, thankee," returned Sailor Ben, looking as guilty as if he had been detected in picking a pocket.

"And I am very glad to see you, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Sailor Ben," suggested that worthy.

"Mr. Sailor Ben," added the Captain, smiling. "Tom, open the door, there's Kitty with the glasses."

I opened the door, and Kitty entered the room bringing the things on a waiter, which

she was about to set on the table, when suddenly she uttered a loud shriek; the decanter and glasses fell with a crash to the floor, and Kitty, as white as a sheet, was seen flying through the hall.

"It's his wraith! It's his wraith!" heard Kitty shrieking, in the kitchen.

My grandfather and I turned to Sailor Ben. His eyes were standing out of his head like a lobster's.

"It's my own little Irish lass!" shouted the sailor, and he darted into the hall after her.

Even then we scarcely caught the meaning of his words, but when we saw Sailor Ben and Kitty sobbing on each other's shoulder in the kitchen, we understood all.

"I begs your honor's parden, sir," said Sailor Ben, lifting his tear-stained face above Kitty's tumbled hair; "I begs your honor's parden for kicking up a rumpus in the house, but it's my own little Irish lass as I lost so long ago!"

"Heaven preserve us!" cried the Captain, blowing his nose violently,—a transparent ruse to hide his emotion.

Miss Abigail was in an upper chamber sweeping; but on hearing the unusual racket below, she scented an accident and came ambling down stairs with a bottle of the infallible hot-drops in her hand. Nothing but the firmness of my grandfather prevented her from giving Sailor Ben a table-spoonful on the spot. But when she learned what had come about,—that this was Kitty's husband, that Kitty Collins wasn't Kitty Collins now, but Mrs. Benjamin Watson, of Nantucket,—the good soul sat down on the meal-chest and sobbed as if—to quote from Captain Nutter—as if a husband of her own had turned up!

A happier set of people than we were never met together in a dingy kitchen or anywhere else. The Captain ordered a fresh decanter of Madeira, and made all hands, excepting myself, drink a cup to the return of "the prodigal sea-son," as he persisted in calling Sailor Ben.

After the first flush of joy and surprise was over Kitty grew silent and constrained. Now and then she fixed her eyes thoughtfully on her husband. Why had he deserted her all these long years? What right had he to look for a welcome from one he had treated so cruelly? She had been true to him, but had he been true to her? Sailor Ben must have guessed what was passing in her mind, for presently he took her hand and said,—

"Well, lass, it's a long yarn, but you shall have it all in good time. It was my

* Ghost, spirit.

on the table, with a loud shriek; then all with a crash to the white as a sheet, in the hall.

"his wraith!" "in the kitchen."

I turned to Sailor standing out of the

Irish lass!" shouted into the hall after

caught the meal. When we saw Sailor on each other, we understood

"parden, sir," said tear-stained face; "I beg your pardon, sir, I was up a rumpus with my own little Irish lass."

"cried the Captain violently,—a transgression."

upper chamber, during the unusual of an accident and with a bottle of her hand. "Nothing," my grandfather said, "Sailor Ben a

But when she about,—that this at Kitty Collins but Mrs. Benjamin,—the good soul and sobbed as Nutter—as if a ned up!

than we were in the kitchen or Captain ordered a and made all to drink a cup of the on," as he per-

y and surprise and constrained. "eyes thought he deserted that right had one he had been true to her? Sailor was passing in look her hand

arn, but you It was my

hard luck as made us part company, an' no will of mine, for I loved you dear."

Kitty brightened up immediately, needing no other assurance of Sailor Ben's faithfulness.

When his hour had expired, we walked with him down to the wharf, where the Captain held a consultation with the mate which resulted in an extension of Mr. Watson's leave of absence, and afterwards in his discharge from his ship. We then went to the "Mariner's Home" to engage a room for him, as he wouldn't hear of accepting the hospitalities of the Nutter House.

"You see, I'm only an uneducated man," he remarked to my grandfather, by way of explanation.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH SAILOR BEN SPINS A YARN.

Of course we were all very curious to learn what had befallen Sailor Ben that morning long ago, when he bade his little bride good by and disappeared so mysteriously.

After tea, that same evening, we assembled around the table in the kitchen,—the only place where sailor Ben felt at home,—to hear what he had to say for himself.

The candles were snuffed, and a pitcher of foaming nut-brown ale was set at the elbow of the speaker, who was evidently embarrassed by the respectability of his audience, consisting of Captain Nutter, Miss Abigail, myself, and Kitty, whose face shone with happiness like one of the polished tin platters on the dresser.

"Well, my hearties," commenced Sailor Ben,—then he stopped short and turned very red, that it struck him that maybe this was not quite the proper way to address a dignitary like the Captain and a severe elderly lady like Miss Abigail Nutter, who sat bolt upright staring at him as she would have stared at the Tycoon of Japan himself.

"I ain't much of a hand at spinnin' a yarn," remarked Sailor Ben, apologetically, "specially when the yarn is all about a man as has made a fool of hisself, an' specially when that man's name is Benjamin Watson."

"Bravo!" cried Captain Nutter, rapping on the table encouragingly.

"Thankee, sir, thankee. I go back to the time when Kitty an' me was livin' in lodgin's by the dock in New York. We was as happy, sir, as two porpusses, which they toil not neither do they spin. But when I seed the money gettin' low in the locker,—Kitty's starboard stockin', savin' your presence, marm,—I got down-hearted like, seein' as I should be obleeged to ship agin, for it didn't

seem as I could do much ashore. An' then the sea was my nat'ral spear of action. I wasn't exactly born on it, look you, but I fell into it the fust time I was let out arter my birth. My mother slipped her cable for a heavenly port afore I was old enough to hail her; so I larrit to look on the ocean for a sort of step-mother,—an' a precious hard one she has been to me.

"The idee of leavin' Kitty so soon arter our marriage went agin my grain considerable. I cruised along the docks for somethin' to doin the way stevedore; an' though I hitched up a stray job here and there, I didn't arn enough to buy ship-bisket for a rat, let alone feedin' two human mouths. There was'n't nothin' honest I wouldn't have turned a hand to; but the longshore-men gobbled up all the work, an' a outsider like me didn't stand a show.

"Things got from bad to worse; the month's rent took all our cash except a dollar or so, an' the sky looked kind o' squally fore an' aft. Well, I set out one mornin',—that identical unlucky mornin',—determined to come back an' toss some pay into Kitty's lap, if I had to sell my jacket for it. I spied a big unloadin' coal at pier No. 47,—how well I remembers it! I hailed the mate, an' offered myself for a coal-heaver. But I wasn't wanted, as he told me civilly enough, which was better treatment than usual. As I turned off rather glum I was signalled by one of them sleek, smooth-spoken rascals with a white hat an' a weed on it, as is always goin' about the piers a-seekin' who they may devour.

"We sailors know 'em for rascals from stern to stern, but somehow every fresh one fleeces us jest as his mate did afore him. We don't larn nothin' by experience; we're jest no better than a lot of babbys with no brains.

"'Good mornin', my man,' sez the chap, as iley as you please.

"'Mornin', sir,' sez I.

"'Lookin' for a job?' sez he.

"'Through the big end of a telescope,' sez I,—meanin' that the chances for a job looked very small from my pint of view.

"'You're the man for my money,' sez the sharper, smilin' as innocent as a cherubim; 'jest step in here, till we talk it over.'

"So I goes with him like a nat'l-born idiot, into a little grocery-shop near by, where we sets down at a table with a bottle atween us. Then it comes out as there is a New Bedford whaler about to start for the fishin' grounds, an' jest one able-bodied sailor like me is wanted to make up the crew. Would I go? I wouldn't on no terms.

"'I'll bet you fifty dollars,' sez he, 'that you'll come back fust mate.'

"'I'll bet you a hundred,' sez I, 'that I don't, for I've signed papers as keeps me ashore, an' the parson has witnessed the deed!'

"So we sat there, he urg'in me to ship, an' I chaillin' him cheerful over the bottle.

"After a while I begun to feel a little queer; things got foggy in my upper works, an' I remembers, faint-like, of signin' a paper, then I remembers bein' in a small boat, an' then I remembers nothin' until I heard the mate's whistle pipin' all hands on deck. I tumbled up with the rest, an' there I was,—on board of a whaler outward bound for a three years' cruise, an' my dear little lass ashore awaitin' for me."

"Miserable wretch!" said Miss Abigail, in a voice that vibrated among the tin platters on the dresser. This was Miss Abigail's way of testifying her sympathy.

"Thankee, marm," returned Sailor Ben, doubtfully.

"No talking to the man at the wheel," cried the Captain. Upon which we all laughed. "Spin!" added my grandfather.

Sailor Ben resumed;—

"I leave you to guess the wretchedness as fell upon me, for I've not got the gift to tell you. There I was down on the ship's books for a three years' viage, an' no help for it. I feel nigh to six hundred years old when I think how long that viage was. There isn't no hour-glass as runs slow enough to keep a tally of the slowness of them fust hours. But I done my duty like a man, seein' there wasn't no way of gettin' out of it. I told my shipmates of the trick as had been played on me, an' they tried to cheer me up a bit; but I was sore sorrowful for a long spell. Many a night on watch I put my face in my hands and sobbed for thinkin' of the little woman left among the land-sharks, an' no man to have an eye on her, God bless her!"

Here Kitty softly drew her chair nearer to Sailor Ben, and rested one hand on his arm.

"Our adventures among the whales, I take it, doesn't consarn the present company here assembled. So I give that the go by. There's an end to everythin', even to a whalin' viage. My heart all but choked me the day we put into New Bedford with our cargo of ile. I got my three years' pay in a lump, an' made for New York like a flash of lightnin'. The people hove to and looked at me, as I rushed through the streets like a madman, until I came to the spot where the lodgin'-house stood on West Street. But, Lord love ye, there wasn't no such lodgin'-house there, but a great new brick shop.

"I made bold to go in an' ask arter the old place, but nobody knowed nothin' about

it, save as it had been torn down two year or more. I *was* adrift now, for I had reckoned all them days and nights on gittin' word of Kitty from Dan Shackford, the man as kept the lodgin'."

"As I stood there with all the wind knockin' out of my sails, the idee of runnin' along side the perlice-station popped into my head. The perlice was likely to know the latitude of man like Dan Shackford, who wasn't over an' above respectable. They did know,—he had died in the Tombs just that day twelvemonth. A coineydunce, wasn't it? I was ready to drop when they told me this; howsomever, I bore up an' gave the chief a notion of the fix I was in. He writ a notice which I put into the news-papers every day for three months; but nothin' come of it. I cruised over the city week in and week out; I went to every sort of place where they hired women hands; I didn't leave a thing undone that a unedeicated man could do. But nothin' come of it. I don't believe there was a wretched soul in that big city of wretchedness than me. Sometimes I wanted to lay down in the streets and die.

"Driftn' disconsolate one day among the shippin', who should I overhaul but the identical smooth-spoken chap with a white hat an' a weed on it! I didn't know if there was any sperit left in me till I clapped eye on his very unpleasant countenance. 'You villain!' sez I, 'where's my little Irish lass as you dragged me away from?' an' I lighted on him, hat and all, like that!"

Here Sailor Ben brought his fist down on the deal table with the force of a sledge-hammer. Miss Abigail gave a start, and the ale leaped up in the pitcher like a miniature fountain.

"I begs your parden, ladies and gentlemen all; but the thought of that feller with his ring and his watch-chain an' his walrus face, is alus too many for me. I was for pitchin' him into the North River, when a perliceman prevented me from benefitin' the human family. I had to pay five dollars for hittin' the chap (they said it was salt and butter), an' that's what I call a neat, genteel luxury. It was worth double the money jest to see that white hat, with a weed on it, layin' on the wharf like a busted accordin.

"Arter months of useless sarch, I went to sea agin. I never got into a foren port but I kept a watch out for Kitty. Once I thought I seed her in Liverpool, but it was only a gal as looked like her. The numbers of women in different parts of the world as looked like her was amazin'. So a good many years crawled by, an' I wandered from place to place, never givin' up the sarch. I might have been chief mate scores

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of times, maybe master; but I hadn't no am-
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 years,—outlandish people an' cities, storms,
 shipwracks, an' battles. I seed many a true
 mate go down, and sometimes I envied
 them what went to their rest. But these
 things is neither here nor there.

"About a year ago I shipped on board
 the Belphebe yonder, an' of all the strange
 winds as ever blowed, the strangest an' the
 best was the wind that blowed me to this
 here blessed spot. I can't be too thankful
 That I am as thankful as it is possible for
 an uneducated man to be. He knows as
 reads the heart of all."

Here ended Sailor Ben's yarn, which I
 have written down in his own homely words
 as nearly as I can recall them. After he had
 finished, the Captain shook hands with him
 and served out the ale.

As Kitty was about to drink, she paused
 rested the cup on her knee, and asked what
 day of the month it was.

"The twenty-seventh," said the Captain,
 wondering what she was driving at.

"Then," cried Kitty, "it's ten years this
 night since—"

"Since what?" asked my grandfather.

"Since the little lass and I got spliced!"
 roared Sailor Ben. "There's another coin-
 cidence for you!"

On hearing this we all clapped hands, and
 the Captain, with a degree of ceremony that
 was almost painful, drank a bumper to the
 health and happiness of the bride and bride-
 groom.

It was a pleasant sight to see the two old
 lovers sitting side by side, in spite of all
 drinking from the same little cup,—a battered
 zinc dipper which Sailor Ben had unslung
 from a strap round his waist. I think I
 never saw him without this dipper and a
 sheath-knife suspended just back of his hip,
 ready for any convivial occasion.

We had a merry time of it. The Captain
 was a great force this evening and not only
 related his famous exploit in the war of 1812,
 but regaled the company with a dashing sea-
 song from Mr. Shakespeare's play of *The
 Tempest*. He had a mellow tenor voice (not
 Shakespeare, but the Captain), and rolled
 out the verse with a will.

"The master, the warden, the boatswain and I
 The gunner and his mate,
 Lov'd Moll, Meg, and Murian, and Margery.
 But none of us cared for Kate."

"A very good song, and very well sung,"
 says Sailor Ben; "but some of us *does* care
 for Kate. Is this Mr. Shawspear a sea-
 farin' man, sir?"

"Not at present," replied the Captain, with
 a monstrous twinkle in his eye.

The clock was striking ten when the party

broke up. The Captain walked to the "Mar-
 iner's Home" with his guest, in order to
 question him regarding his future move-
 ments.

"Well, sir," said he, "I ain't as young as I
 was, an' I don't calulate to go to sea no
 more. I propose to drop anchor here, an'
 hug the land until the old hulk goes to
 pieces. I've got two or three thousand dol-
 lars in the locker, an' expects to get uncom-
 mon comfortable without askin' no odds
 from the Assylum for Decayed Mariners."

My grandfather indorsed the plan warmly,
 and Sailor Ben did drop anchor at River-
 mouth, where he speedily became one of the
 institutions of the town.

His first step was to buy a small one-story
 cottage located at the head of the wharf,
 within gun-shot of the Nutt House. To
 the great amusement of my grandfather,
 sailor Ben painted the cottage a light sky-
 blue, and ran a broad black stripe around it
 just under the eaves. In this stripe he painted
 white port-holes, at regular distances,
 making his residences look as much like a
 man-of-war as possible. With a short flag-
 staff projecting over the door like a bows-
 prit, the effect was quite magical. My de-
 scription of the exterior of this palatial resi-
 dence is complete when I add that the pro-
 prietor nailed a horseshoe against the front
 door to keep off the witches,—a very neces-
 sary precaution in these latitudes.

The inside of Sailor Ben's abode was not
 less striking than the outside. The cottage
 contained two rooms; the opening on the
 wharf he called his cabin; here he ate and
 slept. His few tumblers and a frugal col-
 lection of crockery were set in a rack sus-
 pended over the table, which had a cleat of
 wood nailed round the edge to prevent the
 dishes from sliding off in case of a heavy
 sea. Hanging against the walls were three
 or four highly colored prints of celebrated
 frigates, and a lithograph picture of a rosy
 young woman insufficiently clad in the
 American flag. This was labelled "Kitty,"
 though I'm sure it looked no more like her
 than I did. A walrus-tooth with an Esqui-
 maux engraved on it, a shark's jaw, and the
 blade of a sword-fish were among the enviable
 decorations of this apartment. In one cor-
 ner stood his bunk, or bed, and in the other
 his well-worn sea-chest, a perfect Pandora's
 box of mysteries. You would have thought
 yourself in the cabin of a real ship.

The little room aft, separated from the
 cabin by a sliding door, was the caboose.
 It held a cooking-stove, pots, pans, and
 groceries; also a lot of fishing-lines and
 coils of tarred twine, which made the place
 smell like a fore-castle, and a delightful
 smell it is—to those who fancy it.

Kitty didn't leave our service, but played house-keeper for both establishments, returning at night to Sailor Ben's. He shortly added a wherry to his worldly goods, and in the fishing season made a very handsome income. During the winter he employed himself manufacturing crab-nets, for which he found no lack of customers.

His popularity among the boys was immense. A jackknife in his expert hand was a whole chest of tools. He could whittle out anything from a wooden chain to a Chinese pagoda, or a full-rigged seventy-four a foot long. To own a ship of Sailor Ben's building was to be exalted above your fellow-creatures. He didn't carve many, and those he refused to sell, choosing to present them to his young friends, of whom Tom Bailey, you may be sure, was one.

How delightful it was of winter nights to sit in his cosy cabin, close to the ship's stove (he wouldn't hear of having a fireplace), and listen to Sailor Ben's yarns! In the early summer twilights, when he sat on the door-step splicing a rope or mending a net, he always had a bevy of blooming young faces alongside.

The dear old fellow! How tenderly the years touched him after this!—all the more tenderly, it seemed, for having roughed him so cruelly in other days.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW WE ASTONISHED THE RIVERMOUTH- IANS.

Sailor Ben's arrival partly drove the New Orleans project from my brain. Besides, there was just then a certain movement on foot by the Centipede Club which helped to engross my attention.

Pepper Whitcomb took the Captain's veto philosophically, observing that he thought from the first the governor wouldn't let me go. I don't think Pepper was quite honest in that.

But to the subject in hand.

Among the few changes that have taken place in Rivermouth during the past twenty years there is one which I regret. I lament the removal of all those varnished iron cannon which used to do duty as posts at the corners of streets leading from the river. They were quaintly ornamental, each set upon end with a solid shot soldered into its mouth, and gave to that part of the town a picturesqueness very poorly atoned for by the conventional wooden stakes that have deposed them.

These guns ("old sogers" the boys called them) had their story, like everything else in Rivermouth. When that everlasting last

war—the war of 1812, I mean—came to an end, all the brig schooners, and bark fitted out at this time as privateers were eager to get rid of their useless twelve-pounders and swivals as they had previously been to obtain them. Many of the pieces had cost large sums, and now they were little better than so much crude iron,—no so good, in fact, for they were clung to things to break up and melt over. The government didn't want them; private citizens didn't want them; they were a drug in the market.

But there was one man, ridiculous beyond his generation, who got it into his head that a fortune was to be made out of these same guns. To buy them all, to hold on to them until war was declared again (as he had no doubt it would be in a few months), and then sell out at fabulous prices,—this was the daring idea that addled the pate of Silas Trefethen. "Dealer in E. & W. I. Goods and Groceries," as the faded sign over his shop-door informed the public.

Silas went shrewdly to work, buying up every old cannon he could lay hands on. His back-yard was soon crowded with broken-down gun-carriages, and his barn with guns, like an arsenal. When Silas's purpose got wind it was astonishing how valuable that thing became which just now was worth nothing at all.

"Ha, ha!" thought Silas; "somebody else is 'tryin' tu git control of the market. But I s'pose I've got the start of him."

So he went on buying and buying, oftentimes paying double the original price of the article. People in the neighboring towns collected all the worthless ordnance they could find, and sent it by the cart-load to Rivermouth.

When his barn was full, Silas began piling the rubbish in his cellar, then in his parlor. He mortgaged the stock of his grocery-store, mortgaged his house, his barn, his horse, and would have mortgaged himself, if any one would have taken him as security, in order to carry on the grand speculation. He was a ruined man, and as happy as a lark.

Surely poor Silas was cracked, like the majority of his own cannon. More or less crazy he must have been always. Years before this he purchased an elegant rosewood coffin, and kept it in one of the spare rooms in his residence. He even had his name engraved on the silver-plate, leaving a blank after the word "Died."

The blank was filled up in due time, and well it was for Silas that he secured so stylish a coffin in his opulent days, for when he died his worldly wealth would not have bought him a pine box, to say nothing of

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It was that sweet old lady, Dame Jocelyn, who told me the story of Silas Trefethen, for these things happened long before my day. Silas died in 1817.

At Trefethen's death his unique collection came under the auctioneer's hammer. Some of the larger guns were sold to the town, and planted at the corners of the divers streets; others went off to the iron-foundry; the balance, numbering twelve, were dumped down on a deserted wharf at the foot of Anchor Lane, where, summer after summer, they rested at their ease in the grass and fungi, pelted in autumn by the rain and annually buried by the winter snow. It is with these twelve guns that our story has to deal.

The wharf where they reposed was shut off from the street by a high fence, a silent, dreary old wharf, covered with strange weeds and mosses. On account of its seclusion and the good fishing it afforded, it was much frequented by us boys.

There we met many an afternoon to throw out our lines, or play leapfrog among the rusty cannon. They were famous fellows in our eyes. What a racket they had made in the heyday of their unchastened youth! What stories they might tell now, if their puffy metallic lips could only speak! Once they were lively talkers enough; but there the grim sea-dogs lay, silent and forlorn in spite of all their former growlings.

They always seemed to me like a lot of venerable disabled tars, stretched out on a lawn in front of a hospital, gazing seaward, and mutely lamenting their lost youth.

But once more they were destined to lift up their dolorous voices,—once more ere they keeled over and lay speechless for all time. And this is how it befell.

Jack Harris, Charley Marden, Harry Blake, and myself were fishing off the wharf one afternoon, when a thought flashed upon me like an inspiration.

"I say, boys!" I cried, hauling in my line hand over hand, "I've got something!"

"What does it pull like, youngster?" asked Harris, looking down at the taut line and expecting to see a big perch at least.

"O, nothing in the fish way," I returned, laughing; "it's about the old guns."

"What about them?"

"I was thinking what jolly fun it would be to set off one of the old sogers on his legs and serve him out a ration of gunpowder."

Up came the three lines in a jiffy. An

enterprise better suited to the disposition of my companions could not have been proposed.

In a short time we had one of the smaller cannon over on its back and were busy scraping the green rust from the touch-hole. The mould had spiked the gun so effectually, that for a while we fancied we should have to give up our attempt to resuscitate the old soger.

"A long gimlet would clear it out," said Charley Marden, "if we only had one."

I looked to see if Sailor Ben's flag was flying at the cabin door, for he always took in the colors when he went off fishing.

"When you want to know if the Admiral's aboard, just cast an eye to the bunting, my hearties," says Sailor Ben.

Sometimes in a jocose mood he called himself the Admiral, and I am sure he deserved to be one. The Admiral's flag was flying, and I soon procured a gimlet from his carefully kept tool-chest.

Before long we had the gun in working order. A newspaper lashed to the end of a lath served as a swab to dust out the bore. Jack Harris blew through the touch-hole and pronounced all clear.

Seeing our task accomplished so easily, we turned our attention to the other guns, which lay in all sorts of postures in the rank grass. Borrowing a rope from Sailor Ben, we managed with immense labor to drag the heavy pieces into position and place a brick under each muzzle to give it the proper elevation. When we beheld them all in a row, like a regular battery, we simultaneously conceived an idea, the magnitude of which struck us dumb for a moment.

Our first intentions was to load and fire a single gun. How feeble and insignificant was such a plan compared to that which now sent the light dancing into our eyes!

"What could we have been thinking of?" cried Jack Harris. "We'll give 'em a broadside, to be sure, if we die for it!"

We turned to with a will, and before nightfall had nearly half the battery overhauled and ready for service. To keep the artillery dry we stuffed wads of loose hemp into the muzzles, and fitted wooden pegs to the touch-holes.

At recess the next noon the Centipedes met in a corner of the school yard to talk over the proposed lark. The original projectors, though they would have liked to keep the thing secret, were obliged to make a club matter of it, inasmuch as funds were required for ammunition. There had been no recent drain on the treasury, and the society could well afford to spend a few dollars in so notable an undertaking.

It was unanimously agreed that the plan should be carried out in the handsomest manner, and a subscription to that end was taken on the spot. Several of the Centipeds hadn't a cent, excepting the one strung around their necks; others, however, were richer. I chanced to have a dollar, and it went into the cap quicker than lightning. When the club, in view of my munificence, voted to name the guns Bailey's Battery I was prouder than I have ever been since over anything.

The money thus raised, added to that already in the treasury, amounted to nine dollars,—a fortune in those days; but not more than we had use for. This sum was divided into twelve parts, for it would not do for one boy to buy all the powder, nor even for us all to make our purchases at the same place. That would excite suspicion at any time, particularly at a period so remote from the Fourth of July.

There were only three stores in town licensed to sell powder; that gave each store four customers. Not to run the slightest risk of remark, one boy bought his powder on Monday, the next boy on Tuesday, and so on until the requisite quantity was in our possession. This we put into a keg and carefully hid in a dry spot on the wharf.

Our next step was to finish cleaning the guns, which occupied two afternoons, for several of the old sozers were in a very congested state indeed. Having completed the task, we came upon a difficulty. To set off the battery by daylight was out of the question; it must be done at night; it must be done with fuses, for no doubt the neighbors would turn out after the first two or three shots, and it would not pay to be caught in the vicinity.

Who knew anything about fuses? Who could arrange it so the guns would go off one after the other, with an interval of a minute or so between?

Theoretically we knew that a minute fuse lasted a minute: double the quantity, two minutes; but practically we were at a stand still. There was but one person who could help us in this extremity,—Sailor Ben. To me was assigned the duty of obtaining what information I could from the ex-gunner, it being left to my discretion whether or not to intrust him with our secret.

So one evening I dropped into the cabin and artfully turned the conversation to fuses in general, and then to particular fuses, but without getting much out of the old boy, who was busy making a twine hammock. Finally, I was forced to divulge the whole plot.

The Admiral had a sailor's love for a joke, and entered at once and heartily into our

scheme. He volunteered to prepare the fuses himself, and I left the labor in his hands, having bound him by several extraordinary oaths,—such as "Hope-I-may-die" and "Shiver-my timbers,"—not to betray us come what would.

This was Monday evening. On Wednesday the fuses were ready. That night we went to unmuzzle Bailey's Battery. Mr. Grimshaw saw that something was wrong somewhere, for we were restless and absently minded in the classes, and the best of us came to grief before the morning session was over. When Mr. Grimshaw announced "Guy Fawkes" as the subject for our composition, you might have knocked down the Mystic Twelve with a feather.

The coincidence was certainly curious, but when a man has committed, or is about to commit an offence, a hundred truths which would pass unnoticed at another time, seem to point at him with convicting fingers. No doubt Guy Fawkes himself received many a start after he had got the wicked kegs of gunpowder neatly piled up under the House of Lords.

Wednesday, as I have mentioned, was half-holiday, and the Centipedes assembled in my barn to decide on the final arrangements. These were as simple as could be. As the fuses were connected, it needed but one person to fire the train. Hereupon arose a discussion as to who was the proper person. Some argued that I ought to apply the match, the battery being christened after me, and the main idea, moreover, being mine. Others advocated the claim of Phil Adams as the oldest boy. At last we drew lots for the post of honor.

Twelve slips of folded paper, upon one of which was written "Thou art the man," were placed in a quart measure, and thoroughly shaken; then each member stepped up and lifted out his destiny. At a given signal we opened our billets. "Thou art the man!" said the slip of paper trembling in my fingers. The sweets and anxieties of a leader were mine the rest of the afternoon.

Directly after twilight set in Phil Adams stole down to the wharf and fixed the fuses to the guns, laying a train of powder from the principal fuse to the fence, through the chink of which I was to drop the match at midnight.

At ten o'clock Rivermouth goes to bed. At eleven o'clock Rivermouth is as quiet as a country churchyard. At twelve o'clock there is nothing left with which to compare the stillness that broods over the little seaport.

In the midst of this stillness I arose and glided out of the house like a phantom bent

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on an evil errand; like a phantom I flitted through the silent street, hardly drawing breath until I knelt down beside the fence at the appointed place.

Pausing a moment for my heart to stop thumping, I lighted the match and shielded it with both hands until it was well under way, and then dropped the blazing splinter on the slender thread of gunpowder.

A noiseless flash instantly followed, and all was dark again. I peeped through the crevice in the fence, and saw the main fuse spitting out sparks like a conjurer. Assured that the train had not failed, I took to my heels, fearful lest the fuse might burn more rapidly than we calculated, and cause an explosion before I could get home. This, luckily, did not happen. There's a special Providence that watches over idiots, drunken men, and boys.

I delayed the ceremony of undressing by plunging into bed, jacket, boots, and all. I am not sure I took off my cap; but I know that I had hardly pulled the coverlid over me, when "Boom!" sounded the first gun of Bailey's Battery.

I lay as still as a mouse. In less than two minutes there was another burst of thunder, and then another. The third gun was a tremendous fellow and fairly shook the house.

The town was waking up. Windows were thrown open here and there and people called to each other across the streets asking what that firing was for.

"Boom!" went gun number four.

I sprang out of bed and tore off my jacket, for I heard the Captain feeling his way along the wall to my chamber. I was half undressed by the time he found the knob of the door.

"I say, sir," I cried, "do you hear those guns?"

"Not being deaf I do," said the Captain, a little tartly, "my objection on his hearing always nettled him." "But what on earth they are for I can't conceive. You had better get up and dress yourself."

"I'm nearly dressed, sir."

"Boom! Boom!" two of the guns had gone off together.

The door of Miss Abigail's bedroom opened hastily, and that pink of modest propriety stepped out into the hall in her night-gown,—the only indecorous thing I ever knew her to do. She held a lighted candle in her hand and looked like a very aged Lady Macbeth.

"O Daniel, this is dreadful! What do you suppose it means?"

"I really can't suppose," said the Captain rubbing his ear, "but I guess it's over now."

"Boom!" said Bailey's Battery.

Rivermouth was wide awake now, and half the male population were in the streets, running different ways, for the firing seemed to proceed from opposite points of the town. Everybody waylaid everybody else with questions; but as no one knew what was the occasion of the tumult, people who were not usually nervous began to be oppressed by the mystery.

Some thought the town was being bombarded; some thought the world was coming to an end, as the pious and ingenious Mr. Miller had predicted it would; but those who couldn't form any theory whatever were the most perplexed.

In the meanwhile Bailey's Battery belowered away at regular intervals. The greatest confusion reigned everywhere by this time. People with lanterns rushed hither and thither. The town-watch had turned out to a man, and marched off, in admirable order, in the wrong direction. Discovering their mistake, they retraced their steps, and got down to the wharf just as the last cannon belched forth its lightning.

A dense cloud of sulphurous smoke floated over Anchor Lane, obscuring the starlight. Two or three hundred people, in various stages of excitement, crowded about the upper end of the wharf, not liking to advance farther until they were satisfied that the explosions were over. A board was here and there blown from the fence, and through the openings thus afforded a few of the more daring spirits at length ventured to crawl.

The cause of the racket soon transpired. A suspicion that they had been sold gradually dawned on the Rivermouthians. Many were exceedingly indignant, and declared that no penalty was severe enough for those concerned in such a prank; others—and these were the very people who had been terrified nearly out of their wits—had the assurance to laugh, saying that they knew all along it was only a trick.

The town-watch boldly took possession of the ground, and the crowd began to disperse. Knots of gossips lingered here and there near the place indulging in vain surmises as to who the invisible gunners could be.

There was no more noise that night, but many a timid person lay awake expecting a renewal of the mysterious cannonading. The Oldest Inhabitant refused to go to bed on any terms, but persisted in sitting up in a rocking-chair, with his hat and mittens on, until daybreak.

I thought I should never get to sleep. The moment I drifted off in a doze I fell to

laughing and woke myself up. But towards morning slumber overtook me, and I had a series of disagreeable dreams, in one of which I was waited upon by the ghost of Silas Trefethen with an exorbitant bill for the use of his guns. In another, I was dragged before a court-martial and sentenced by Sailor Ben, in a frizzled wig and three-cornered cocked hat, to be shot to death by Bailey's Battery,—a sentence which Sailor Ben was about to execute with his own hand, when I suddenly opened my eyes and found the sunshine lying pleasantly across my face. I tell you I was glad!

That unaccountable fascination which leads the guilty to hover about the spot where his crime was committed drew me down to the wharf as soon as I was dressed. Phil Adams, Jack Harris, and others of the conspirators were already there, examining with a mingled feeling of curiosity and apprehension the havoc occasioned by the battery.

The fence was badly shattered and the ground ploughed up for several yards round the place where the guns formerly lay.—formerly lay, for now they were scattered every which way. There was scarcely a gun that hadn't burst. Here was one ripped open from muzzle to breech, and there was another with its mouth blown into the shape of a trumpet. Three of the guns had disappeared bodily, but on looking over the edge of the wharf we saw them standing on end in the tide-mud. They had popped overboard in their excitement.

"I tell you what, fellows," whispered Phil Adams, "it is lucky we didn't try to touch 'em off with punk. They'd have blown us all to flinders."

The destruction of Bailey's Battery was not, unfortunately, the only catastrophe. A fragment of one of the cannon had carried away the chimney of Sailor Ben's cabin. He was very mad at first, but having prepared the fuse himself he didn't dare to complain openly.

"I'd have taken a reef in the blessed stove-pipe," said the Admiral, gazing ruefully at the smashed chimney, "if I had known as how the Flagship was agoin' to be under fire."

The next day he rigged out an iron funnel, which, being in sections, could be detached and taken in at a moment's notice. On the whole, I think he was resigned to the demolition of his brick chimney. The stove-pipe was a great deal more ship-shape.

The town was not so easily appeased. The select-men determined to make an example of the guilty parties, and offered a reward for their arrest, holding out a promise of pardon to any one of the offenders who would furnish information against the rest.

But there were no faint hearts among the Centipedes. Suspicion rested for a while on several persons,—on the soldiers at the fort on a crazy fellow, known about town as "Bottle-Nose"; and at last on Sailor Ben.

"Shiver my timbers!" cries that deep-injured individual. "Do you suppose, as I have lived to sixty year, an' ain't got no more sense than to go for to blaze away at my own upper riggin'? It doesn't stand to reason."

It certainly did not seem probable that Mr. Watson would maliciously knock over his own chimney, and Lawyer Hackett who had the case in hand, bowed himself out of the Admiral's cabin convinced that the right man had not been discovered.

People living by the sea are always more or less superstitious. Stories of specter-ships and mysterious beacons, that lure vessels out of their course and wreck them on unknown reefs, were among the stock legends of Rivermouth; and not a few people in the town were ready to attribute the firing of those guns to some supernatural agency. The Oldest Inhabitant remembered that when he was a boy a dim-looking sort of schooner hove to in the offing one foggy afternoon, fired off a single gun that didn't make any report, and then crumbled to nothing, spar, mast, and hulk, like a piece of burnt paper.

The authorities, however, were of the opinion that human hands had had something to do with the explosions, and they resorted to deep-laid stratagems to get hold of the said hands. One of their traps came very near catching us. They artfully caused an old brass field-piece to be left on the wharf near the scene of our late operations. Nothing in the world but the lack of money to buy powder saved us from falling into the clutches of the two watchmen who lay secreted for a week in a neighboring sail-loft.

It was many a day before the midnight bombardment ceased to be the town talk. The trick was so audacious and on so grand a scale that nobody thought for an instant of connecting us lads with it. Suspicion at length grew weary of lighting on the wrong person, and as conjecture—like the physicians in the epitaph—was in vain, the Rivermouthians gave up the idea of finding out who had astonished them.

They never did find out, and never will, unless they read this veracious history. If the selectmen are still disposed to punish the malefactors, I can supply Lawyer Hackett with evidence enough to convict Pepper Whitcomb, Phil Adams, Charley Marden, and the other honorable members of the Centipede Club. But really I don't think it would pay now.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FROG HE WOULD A-WOING GO.

If the reader supposes that I lived all this while in Rivernmouth without falling a victim to one or more of the young ladies attending Miss Dorothy Gibb's Female Institute, why, then, all I have to say is the reader exhibits his ignorance of human nature.

Miss Gibb's seminary was located within a few minutes' walk of the Temple Grammar School, and numbered about thirty-five pupils, the majority of whom boarded at the Hall.—Primrose Hall, as Miss Dorothy prettily called it. The primroses, as we called them, ranged from seven years of age to sweet seventeen, and a prettier group of sirens never got together even in Rivermouth. for Rivermouth, you should know, is famous for its pretty girls.

There were tall girls and short girls, rosy girls and pale girls, and girls as brown as berries; girls like Amazons, slender girls, weird and winning like Undine, girls with black tresses, girls with auburn ringlets, girls with every tinge of golden hair. To behold Miss Dorothy's young ladies of a Sunday morning walking to church two by two, the smallest toddling at the end of the procession, like the bobs at the tail of a kite, was a spectacle to fill with tender emotion the least susceptible heart. To see Miss Dorothy marching grimly at the head of her light infantry, was to feel the hopelessness of making an attack on any part of the column.

She was a perfect dragon of watchfulness. The most unguarded lifting of an eyelash in the fluttering battalion was sufficient to put her on the lookout. She had had experiences with the male sex, this Miss Dorothy so prim and grim. It was whispered that her heart was a tattered album scrawled over with love-lines, but that she had shut up the volume long ago.

There was a tradition that she had been crossed in love; but it was the faintest of traditions. A gay young lieutenant of marines had flirted with her at a country ball (A. D. 1811), and then marched carelessly away at the head of his company to the shrill music of the fife, without so much as a sigh for the girl he left behind him. Ten years rolled on, the gallant gay lothario—which wasn't his name—married, became a father, and then a grandfather; and at the period of which I am speaking his grandchild was actually one of Miss Dorothy's young ladies. So, at least, ran the story.

The lieutenant himself was dead these many years, but Miss Dorothy never got over his duplicity. She was convinced that

the sole aim of mankind was to win the unguarded affection of maidens, and then march off treacherously with flying colors to the heartless music of the drum and fife. To shield the inmates of Primrose Hall from the bitter influences that had blighted her own early affections was Miss Dorothy's mission in life.

"No wolves prowling about my lambs, if you please," said Miss Dorothy. "I will not allow it."

She was as good as her word. I don't think the boy lives who ever set foot within the limits of Primrose Hall while the seminary was under her charge. Perhaps if Miss Dorothy had given her young ladies a little more liberty, they would not have thought it "such fun" to make eyes over the white lattice fence at the young gentleman of the Temple Grammar School. I say perhaps; for it is one thing to manage thirty-five young ladies and quite another thing to talk about it.

But all Miss Dorothy's vigilance could not prevent the young folks from meeting in the town now and then, nor could her utmost ingenuity interrupt postal arrangements. There was no end of notes passing between the students and the Primroses. Notes tied to the heads of arrows were shot into dormitory windows; notes were tucked under fences, and hidden in the trunks of decayed trees. Every thick place in the boxwood hedge that surrounded the seminary was a possible post-office.

It was a terrible shock to Miss Dorothy the day she unearthed a nest of letters in one of the huge wooden urns surmounting the gateway that led to her dovecot. It was a bitter moment to Miss Phoebe and Miss Candace and Miss Hesba, when they had their locks of hair grimly handed back to them by Miss Gibbs in the presence of the whole school. Girls whose locks of hair had run the blockade in safety were particularly severe on the offenders. But it didn't stop other notes and other tresses, and I would like to know what can stop them while the earth holds together.

Now when I first came to Rivermouth I looked upon girls as rather tame company; I hadn't a spark of sentiment concerning them; but seeing my companions sending and receiving mysterious epistles, wearing bits of ribbon in their button-holes and leaving packages of confectionary (generally lemon drops) in the hollow trunks of trees,—why, I felt that this was the proper thing to do. I resolved, as a matter of duty, to fall in love with somebody, and I didn't care in the least who it was. In much the same mood that Don Quixote selected the Dulcinea del Toboso for his lady-love, I

singled out one of Miss Dorothy's incomparable young ladies for mine.

I debated a long while whether I should not select *two*, but at last settled down on one,—a pale little girl with blue eyes, named Alice. I shall not make a long story of this, for Alice made short work of me. She was secretly in love with Pepper Whitcomb. This occasioned a temporary coolness between Pepper and myself.

Not disheartened, however, I placed Laura Rice—I believe it was Laura Rice—in the vacant niche. The new idol was more cruel than the old. The former frankly sent me to the right about, but the latter was a deceitful lot. She wore my nosegay in her dress at the evening service (the Primroses were marched to church three times every Sunday), she penned me the daintiest of notes, she sent me the glossiest of ringlets (cut, as I afterwards found out, from the stupid head of Miss Gibbs's chamber-maid), and at the same time was holding me and my pony up to ridicule in a series of letters written to Jack Harris. It was Harris himself who kindly opened my eyes.

"I tell you what, Bailey," said that young gentleman, "Laura is an old veteran, and carries too many guns for a youngster. She can't resist a flirtation; I believe she'd flirt with an infant in arms. There's hardly a fellow in the school that hasn't worn her colors and some of her hair. She doesn't give out any more of her own hair now. It's been pretty well used up. The demand was greater than the supply, you see. It's all very well to correspond with Laura, but as to looking for anything serious from her, the knowing ones don't. Hope I haven't hurt your feelings, old boy," (that was a soothing stroke of flattery to call me "old boy,") "but 't'was my duty as a friend and a Centipede to let you know who you were dealing with."

Such was the advice given me by that time-stricken, care-worn, and embittered man of the world, who was sixteen years old if he was a day.

I dropped Laura. In the course of the next twelve months I had perhaps three or four similar experiences, and the conclusion was forced upon me that I was not a boy likely to distinguish myself in this branch of business.

I fought shy of Primrose Hall from that moment. Smiles were smiled over the box-wood hedge, and little hands were occasionally kissed to me; but I only winked my eye patronizingly, and passed on. I never renewed tender relations with Miss Gibbs's young ladies. All this occurred during my first year and a half at Rivermouth.

Between my studies at school, my out-door recreations, and the hurts my vanity received, I managed to escape for the time being any very serious attack of that low fever which, like the measles, is almost certain to seize upon a boy sooner or later. I was not to be an exception. I was merely biding my time. The incidents I have now to relate took place shortly after the event described in the last chapter.

In a life so tranquil and circumscribed as ours in the Nutter House, a visitor was a novelty of no little importance. The whole household awoke from its quietude one morning when the Captain announced that a young niece of his from New York was to spend a few weeks with us.

The blue-chintz room, into which a ray of sun was never allowed to penetrate, was thrown open and dusted, and its mouldy air made sweet with a bouquet of pot-roses placed on the old-fashioned bureau. Kitty was busy all the forenoon washing off the sidewalk and sand-papering the brass knocker on our front-door; and Miss Abigail was up to her elbows in a pigeon-pie.

I felt sure it was for no ordinary person that all these preparations were in progress, and I was right. Miss Nelly Glentworth was no ordinary person. I shall never believe she was. There may have been lovelier women, though I have never seen them; there may have been more brilliant women, though it has not been my fortune to meet them; but that there was ever a more charming one than Nellie Glentworth is a proposition against which I contend.

I don't love her now. I don't think of her once in five years; and yet it would give me a turn if in the course of my daily walk I should suddenly come upon her eldest boy. I may say that her eldest boy was not playing a prominent part in this life when I first made her acquaintance.

It was a drizzling, cheerless afternoon towards the end of summer that a hack drew up at the door of the Nutter House. The Captain and Miss Abigail hastened into the hall on hearing the carriage stop. In a moment more Miss Nellie Glentworth was seated in our sitting-room undergoing a critical examination at the hands of a small boy who lounged uncomfortably on a settee between the windows.

The small boy considered himself a judge of girls, and he rapidly came to the following conclusions: That Miss Nelly was about nineteen; that she had not given away much of her back hair, which hung in two massive chestnut braids over her shoulders; that she was a shade too pale and a trifle too tall; that her hands were nicely shaped and her feet much too diminutive

for daily use. He furthermore observed that her voice was musical, and that her face lighted up with an indescribable brightness when she smiled.

On the whole, the small boy liked her well enough; and, satisfied that she was not a person to be afraid of, but, on the contrary, one who might be made quite agreeable, he departed to keep an appointment with his friend Sir Pepper Whitcomb.

But the next morning when Miss Glentworth came down to breakfast in a purple dress, her face as fresh as one of the moss-roses on the bureau up stairs, and her laugh as contagious as the merriment of a robin, the small boy experienced a strange sensation, and mentally compared her with the loveliest of Miss Gibbs's young ladies, and found those young ladies wanting in the balance.

A night's rest had wrought a wonderful change in Miss Nelly. The pallor and weariness of the journey had passed away. I looked at her through the toast-rack and thought I had never seen anything more winning than her smile.

After breakfast she went out with me to the stable to see Gypsy, and the three of us became friends then and there. Nelly was the only girl that Gypsy ever took the slightest notice of.

It chanced to be a half-holiday, and a base-ball match of unusual interest was to come off on the school ground that afternoon; but, somehow, I didn't go. I hung about the house abstractedly. The Captain went up town, and Miss Abigail was busy in the kitchen making immortal gingerbread. I drifted into the sitting-room, and had our guest all to myself for I don't know how many hours. It was twilight, I recollect, when the Captain returned with letters for Miss Nelly.

Many a time after that I sat with her through the dreamy September afternoons. If I had played base-ball it would have been much better for me.

Those first days of Miss Nelly's visit are very misty in my remembrance. I try in vain to remember just when I began to fall in love with her. Whether the spell worked upon me gradually or fell upon me all at once I don't know. I only know that it seemed to me as if I had always loved her. Things that took place before she came were dim to me, like events that had occurred in the Middle Ages.

Nelly was at least five years my senior. But what of that? Adam is the only man I ever heard of who didn't in early youth fall in love with a woman older than himself, and I am convinced that he would have done so if he had had the opportunity.

I wonder if girls from fifteen to twenty are aware of the glamour they cast over the straggling, awkward boys whom they regard and treat as mere children? I wonder, now. Young women are so keen in such matters. I wonder if Miss Nellie Glentworth never suspected until the very last night of her visit at Rivermouth that I was over ears in love with her pretty self, and was suffering pangs as poignant as if I had been ten feet high and as old as Methuselah? For, indeed, I was miserable throughout all those five weeks. I went down in the Latin class at the rate of three boys a day. Her fresh young eyes came between me and my book, and there was an end of Virgil.

"O love, love, love!
Love is like a dizziness,
It winna let a body
Gang about his business."

I was wretched away from her, and only less wretched in her presence. The especial cause of my woe was this. I was simple a little boy to Miss Glentworth. I knew it. I bewailed it. I ground my teeth and wept in secret over the fact. If I had been aught else in her eyes would she have smoothed my hair so carelessly, sending an electric shock through my whole system? would she have walked with me, hand in hand, for hours in the old garden? and once when I lay on the sofa, my head aching with love and mortification, would she have stooped down and kissed me if I had n't been a little boy? How I despised little boys! How I hated one particular little boy—too little to be loved!

I smile over this very grimly even now. My sorrow was genuine and bitter. It is a great mistake on the part of elderly ladies, male and female, to tell a child that he is seeing his happiest days. Don't you believe a word of it, my little friend. The burdens of childhood are as hard to bear as the crosses that weigh us down later in life, while the happinesses of childhood are tame compared with those of our maturer years. And even if this were not so, it is rank cruelty to throw shadows over the young heart by croaking, "Be merry, for to-morrow you die!"

As the last days of Nelly's visit drew near, I fell into a very unhealthy state of mind. To have her so frank and unconsciously coquettish with me was a daily torment; to be looked upon and treated as a child was bitter almonds; but the thought of losing her altogether was distraction.

The summer was at an end. The days were perceptibly shorter, and now and then came an evening when it was chilly enough to have a wood-fire in our sitting-room. The leaves were beginning to take hectic tints,

and the wind was practising the minor pathetic notes of its autumnal dirge. Nature and myself appeared to be approaching our dissolution simultaneously.

One evening, the evening previous to the day set for Nelly's departure,—how well I remember it!—I found her sitting alone by the wide chimney-piece looking musingly at the crackling black log. There were no candles in the room. On her face and hands, and on the small golden cross at her throat, fell the flickering firelight,—that ruddy, mellow firelight in which one's grandmother would look poetical.

I drew a low stool from the corner and placed it by the side of her chair. She reached out her hand to me, as was her pretty fashion, and so we sat for several moments silently in the changing glow of the burning logs. At length I moved back the stool so that I could see her face in profile without being seen by her. I lost her hand by this movement, but I couldn't have spoken with the listless touch of her fingers on mine. After two or three attempts I said "Nelly," a good deal louder than I intended.

Perhaps the effort it cost me was evident in my voice. She raised herself quickly in the chair and half turned towards me.

"Well, Tom?"

"I—I am very sorry that you are going away."

"So am I. I have enjoyed every hour of my visit."

"Do you think you will ever come back here?"

"Perhaps," said Nelly, and her eyes wandered off into the fitful firelight.

"I suppose you will forget us all very quickly."

"Indeed I shall not. I shall always have the pleasantest memories of Rivermouth."

Here the conversation died a natural death. Nelly sank into a sort of dream, and I meditated. Fearing every moment to be interrupted by some member of the family, I nerved myself to make a bold dash.

"Nelly."

"Well."

"Do you——" I hesitated.

"Do I what?"

"Love any one very much?"

"Why, of course I do," said Nelly, scattering her reverie with a merry laugh. "I love Uncle Nutter, and Aunt Nutter, and you,—and Towser."

Towser, our new dog! I couldn't stand that. I pushed back the stool impatiently and stood in front of her.

"That's not what I mean," I said angrily.

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Do you love any one to marry him?"

"The idea of it," cried Nelly, laughing.

"But you must tell me."

"Must, Tom?"

"Indeed you must, Nelly."

She had risen from the chair with an amused, perplexed look in her eyes. I held her an instant by the dress.

"Please tell me."

"O you silly boy!" cried Nelly. Then she rumbled my hair all over my forehead, and ran laughing out of the room.

Suppose Cinderella had rumbled the prince's hair all over *his* forehead, how would he have liked it? Suppose the Sleeping Beauty, when the king's son with a kiss set her and all the old clocks agoing in the spell-bound castle,—suppose the young minx had looked up and coolly laughed in his eye, I guess the king's son wouldn't have been greatly pleased.

I hesitated a second or two and then rushed after Nelly just in time to run against Miss Abigail, who entered the room with a couple of lighted candles.

"Goodness gracious, Tom!" exclaimed Miss Abigail, "are you possessed?"

I left her scraping the warm spermaceti from one of her thumbs.

Nelly was in the kitchen talking quite unconcernedly with Kitty Coilins. There she remained until supper-time. Supper over, we all adjourned to the sitting-room. I planned and plotted, but could manage in no way to get Nelly alone. She and the Captain played cribbage all the evening.

The next morning my lady did not make her appearance until we were seated at the breakfast-table. I had got up at daylight myself. Immediately after breakfast the carriage arrived to take her to the railway station. A gentleman stepped from this carriage, and greatly to my surprise was warmly welcomed by the Captain and Miss Abigail, and by Miss Nelly herself, who seemed unnecessarily glad to see him. From the hasty conversation that followed I learned that the gentleman had come somewhat unexpectedly to conduct Miss Nelly to Boston. But how did he know that she was to leave that morning? Nelly bade farewell to the Captain and Miss Abigail, made a little rush and kissed me on the nose, and was gone.

As the wheels of the hack rolled up the street and over my finer feelings, I turned to the Captain.

"Who was that gentleman, sir?"

"That was Mr. Waldron."

"A relation of yours, sir?" I asked craftily.

"No relation of mine,—a relation of Nelly's," said the Captain, smiling.

"A cousin," I suggested, feeling a strange hatred spring up in my bosom for the unknown.

"Well, I suppose you might call him a cousin for the present. He's going to marry little Nelly next summer."

In one of Peter Parley's valuable historical works is a description of an earthquake at Lisbon. "At the first shock the inhabitants rushed into the streets; the earth yawned at their feet and the houses tottered and fell on every side." I staggered past the Captain into the street; a giddiness came over me; the earth yawned at my feet, and the houses threatened to fall in on every side of me. How distinctly I remember that momentary sense of confusion when everything in the world seemed toppling over into ruins.

As I have remarked, my love for Nelly is a thing of the past. I had not thought of her for years until I sat down to write this chapter, and yet, now that all is said and done, I shouldn't care particularly to come across Mrs. Waldron's eldest boy in my after-noon's walk. He must be fourteen or fifteen years old by this time,—the young villain!

CHAPTER XIX.

I BECAME A BLIGHTED BEING.

When a young boy gets to be an old boy, when the hair is growing rather thin on the top of the old boy's head, and he has been tamed sufficiently to take a sort of chastened pleasure in allowing the baby to play with his watch seals,—when, I say, an old boy has reached this stage in the journey of life, he is sometimes apt to indulge in sportive remarks concerning his first love.

Now, though I bless my stars that it wasn't in my power to marry Miss Nelly, I am not going to deny my boyish regard for her nor laugh at it. As long as it lasted it was a very sincere and unselfish love, and rendered me proportionately wretched. I say as long as it lasted, for one's first love doesn't last forever.

I am ready, however, to laugh at the amusing figure I cut after I had really ceased to have any deep feeling in the matter. It was then I took it into my head to be a Blighted Being. This was about two weeks after the spectral appearance of Mr. Waldron.

For a boy of a naturally vivacious disposition the part of a blighted being presented difficulties. I had an excellent appetite, I liked society, I liked out-of-door sports, I was fond of handsome clothes. Now all these things were incompatible with

the doleful character I was to assume, and I proceeded to cast them from me. I neglected my hair. I avoided my playmates. I frowned abstractedly. I didn't eat as much as was good for me. I took lonely walks. I brooded in solitude. I not only committed to memory the more turgid poems of the late Lord Byron,—*"Fare thee well, and if forever,"* &c.,—but I became a despondent poet on my own account, and composed a string of "Stanzas to One who will understand them." I think I was a trifle too hopeful on that point; for I came across the verses several years afterwards, and was quite unable to understand them myself.

It was a great comfort to be so perfectly miserable and yet not suffer any. I used to look in the glass and float over the amount and variety of mournful expression I could throw into my features. If I caught myself smiling at anything, I cut the smile short with a sigh. The oddest thing about all this, I never once suspected that I was not unhappy. No one, not even Pepper Whitcomb, was more deceived than I.

Among the minor pleasures of being blighted were the interest and perplexity I excited in the simple souls that were thrown in daily contact with me. Pepper especially. I nearly drove him into a corresponding state of mind.

I had from time to time given Pepper slight but impressive hints of my admiration for Some One (this was in the early part of Miss Glentworth's visit); I had also led him to infer that my admiration was not altogether in vain. He was therefore unable to explain the cause of my strange behavior, for I had carefully refrained from mentioning to Pepper the fact that Some One had turned out to be Another's.

I treated Pepper shabbily. I couldn't resist playing on his tenderer feelings. He was a boy bubbling over with sympathy for any one in any kind of trouble. Our intimacy since Binny Wallace's death had been uninterrupted; but now I moved in a sphere apart, not to be profaned by the step of an outsider.

I no longer joined the boys on the playground at recess. I stayed at my desk reading some lugubrious volume,—usually *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, by the amiable Mrs. Radcliffe. A translation of *The Sorrows of Werter* fell into my hands at this period, and if I could have committed suicide without killing myself, I should certainly have done so.

On half-holidays, instead of fraternizing with Pepper and the rest of our clique, I would wander off alone to Grave Point.

Grave Point—the place where Binny Wallace's body came ashore—was a narrow

and I had rushed out into the river. A crowd of Indian papaws stood and stared, looking on from the mounted guard on the shore. At the extreme end of the peninsula was an old disused graveyard, tenanted principally by the early settlers, who had been slain by the Indians. In a remote corner of the cemetery, set apart from the other grounds, was the grave of a woman who had been hanged in the old colonial times for the murder of her infant. Goodwife Polly Haines had denied the crime to the last, and after her death there had arisen strong doubts as to her actual guilt. It was a belief current among the lads of the town, that if you went to this grave at nightfall on the 10th of November, the anniversary of her execution, and asked, "For what did the magistrates hang you?" a voice would reply, "Nothing."

Many a Rivermouth boy has tremblingly put this question in the dark, and, sure enough, Polly Haines invariably answered nothing.

A low red brick wall, broken down in many places and frosted over with silvery moss, surrounded this burial-ground of our Pilgrim Fathers and their immediate descendants. The latest date on any of the headstones was 1780. A crop of very funny epitaphs sprung up here and there among the overgrown thistles and burdocks, and almost every tablet had a death's-head with cross-bones engraved upon it, or else a puffly round face with a pair of wings stretching out from the ears.

These mortuary emblems furnished me with congenial food for reflection. I used to lie in the long grass, and speculate on the advantages and disadvantages of being a cherub.

I forget what I thought the advantages were, but I remember distinctly of getting into an inextricable tangle on two points. How could a cherub, being all head and wings, manage to sit down when he was tired? To have to sit down on the back of his head struck me as an awkward alternative. Again: Where did a cherub carry those indispensable articles (such as jack-knives, marbles, and pieces of twine) which boys in an earthly state of existence usually stow away in their trousers-pockets?

These were knotty questions, and I was never able to dispose of them satisfactorily.

Meanwhile Pepper Whitcomb would scour the whole town in search of me. He finally discovered my retreat, and dropped in on me abruptly one afternoon, while I was deep in the cherub problem.

"Look here, Tom Bailey!" said Pepper, shying a piece of clam-shell indignantly at the *Hic jacet* on a neighboring gravestone,

"you are just going to the dogs! Can't you tell a fellow what in thunder ails you, instead of prowling round the tombs like a jolly old vampire?"

"Pepper," I replied, solemnly, "don't ask me. All is not well here,"—touching my breast mysteriously. If I had touched my head instead, I should have been nearer the mark.

Pepper stared at me.

"Earthly happiness," I continued, "is a delusion and a snare. You will never be happy, Pepper, until you are a cherub."

Pepper, by the by, would have made an excellent cherub, he was so chubby. Having delivered myself of these gloomy remarks, I arose languidly from the grass and moved away, leaving Pepper staring after me in mute astonishment. I was Hamlet and Werter and the late Lord Byron all in one.

You will ask what my purpose was in cultivating this factitious despondency. None whatever. Blighted beings never have any purpose in life excepting to be as blighted as possible.

Of course my present line of business could not long escape the eye of Captain Nutter. I don't know if the Captain suspected my attachment for Miss Glentworth. He never alluded to it; but he watched me. Miss Abigail watched me, Kitty Collins watched me, and Sailor Ben watched me.

"I can't make out his signals," I overheard the Admiral remark to my grandfather one day. "I hope he ain't got no kind of sickness aboard."

There was something singularly agreeable in being an object of so great interest. Sometimes I had all I could do to preserve my dejected aspect, it was so pleasant to be miserable. I incline to the opinion that people who are melancholy without any particular reason, such as poets artists, and young musicians with long hair have rather an enviable time of it. In a quite way I never enjoyed myself better in my life than when I was a Blighted Being.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH I PROVE MYSELF TO BE THE GRAND-SON OF MY GRANDFATHER.

It was not possible for a boy of my temperament to be a blighted being longer than three consecutive weeks.

I was gradually emerging from my self-imposed cloud when events took place that greatly assisted in restoring me to a more natural frame of mind. I awoke from an imaginary trouble to face a real one.

I suppose you don't know what a financial crisis is? I will give you an illustration.

You are deeply in debt—say to the amount of a quarter of a dollar—to the little knock-nack shop round the corner, where they sell picture-papers, spruce-gum, needles, and Malaga raisins. A boy owes you a quarter of a dollar, which he promises to pay at a certain time. You are depending on this quarter to settle accounts with the small shop-keeper. The time arrives,—and the quarter doesn't. That's a financial crisis, in one sense,—in twenty-five senses, if I may say so.

When this same thing happens, on a grander scale, in the mercantile world, it produces what is called a panic. One man's inability to pay his debts ruins another man, who, in turn, ruins someone else, and so on, until failure after failure makes even the richest capitalists tremble. Public confidence is suspended, and the smaller fry of merchants are knocked over like tenpins.

These commercial panics occur periodically, after the fashion of comets and earthquakes and other disagreeable things. Such a panic took place in New Orleans in the year 18—, and my father's banking-house went to pieces in the crash.

Of a comparatively large fortune nothing remained after paying his debts excepting a few thousand dollars, which he proposed to return North and embark in some less hazardous enterprise. In the mean time it was necessary for him to stay in New Orleans to wind up the business.

My grandfather was in some way involved in this failure, and lost, I fancy, a considerable sum of money; but he never talked much on the subject. He was an unflinching believer in the spilt-milk proverb.

"It can't be gathered up," he would say, "and it's no use crying over it. Pitch into the cow and get some more milk, is my motto."

The suspension of the banking-house was bad enough, but there was an attending circumstance that gave us, at Rivermouth, a great deal more anxiety. The cholera, which some one predicted would visit the country that year, and which, indeed, had made its appearance in a mild form at several points along the Mississippi River, had broken out with much violence at New Orleans.

The report that first reached us through the newspapers was meagre and contradictory; many people discredited it; but a letter from my mother left us no room for doubt. The sickness was in the city. The hospitals were filling up, and hundreds of the citizens were flying from the stricken place by every steamboat. The unsettled state of my father's affairs made it imperative for him to remain at his post; his desertion at that moment

would have been at the sacrifice of all he had saved from the general wreck.

As he would be detained in New Orleans at least three months, my mother declined to come North without him.

After this we awaited with feverish impatience the weekly news that came to us from the South. The next letter advised us that my parents were well, and that the sickness, so far, had not penetrated to the faubourg, or district, where they lived. The following week brought less cheering tidings. My father's business, in consequence of the flight of the other partners, would keep him in the city beyond the period he had mentioned. The family had moved to Pass Christian, a favorite watering-place on Lake Pontchartrain, near New Orleans, where he was able to spend part of each week. So the return North was postponed indefinitely.

It was now that the old longing to see my parents came back to me with irresistible force. I knew my grandfather would not listen to the idea of my going to New Orleans at such a dangerous time, since he had opposed the journey so strongly when the same objection did not exist. But I determined to go nevertheless.

I think I have mentioned the fact that all the male members of our family, on my father's side,—as far back as the Middle Ages,—have exhibited in early youth a decided talent for running away. It was an hereditary talent. It ran in the blood to run away. I do not pretend to explain the peculiarity. I simply admit it.

It was not my fate to change the prescribed order of things. I, too, was to run away, thereby proving, if any proof were needed, that I was the grandson of my grandfather. I do not hold myself responsible for the step any more than I do for the shape of my nose, which is said to be the fac-simile of Captain Nutter's.

I have frequently noticed how circumstances conspire to help a man, or a boy, when he has thoroughly resolved on doing a thing. That very week the Rivermouth Barnacle printed an advertisement that seemed to have been written on purpose for me. It read as follows:—

WANTED.—A Few ABLE-BODIED SEAMEN and a Cabin-Boy, for the ship *Rauklings*, now loading for New Orleans at Johnson's Wharf, Boston. Apply in person, within four days, at the office of Messrs. ——— & Co., or on board the Ship.

How I was to get to New Orleans with only \$4.62 was a question that had been bothering me. This advertisement made it as clear as day. I would go as cabin-boy.

I had taken Pepper into my confidence again; I had told him the story of my love

for Miss Glentworth, with all its harrowing details; and now conceived it judicious to confide in him the change about to take place in my life, so that, if the Rawlings went down in a gale, my friends might have the limited satisfaction of knowing what had become of me.

Pepper shook his head discouragingly, and sought in every way to dissuade me from the step. He drew a disenchanting picture of the existence of a cabin-boy, whose constant duty (according to Pepper) was to have dishes broken over his head whenever the captain or the mate chanced to be out of humor, which was mostly all the time. But nothing Pepper said could turn me a hair's-breadth from my purpose.

I had little time to spare, for the advertisement stated explicitly that applications were to be made in person within four days. I trembled to think of the bare possibility of some other boy snapping up that desirable situation.

It was on Monday that I stumbled upon the advertisement. On Tuesday my preparations were completed. My baggage—consisting of four shirts, half a dozen collars, a piece of shoemaker's wax, (Heaven knows what for!) and seven stockings, wrapped in a silk handkerchief—lay hidden under a loose plank of the stable floor. This was my point of departure.

My plan was to take the last train for Boston, in order to prevent the possibility of immediate pursuit, if any should be attempted. The train left at 4 P. M.

I ate no breakfast and little dinner that day. I avoided the Captain's eye, and would n't have looked Miss Abigail or Kitty in the face for the wealth of the Indies.

When it was time to start for the station I retired quietly to the stable and uncovered my bundle. I lingered a moment to kiss the white star on Gypsy's forehead, and was nearly unmanned when the little animal returned the caress by lapping my cheek. Twice I went back and parted her.

On reaching the station I purchased my ticket with a bravado air that ought to have aroused the suspicion of the ticket-master, and hurried to the car, where I sat fidgeting until the train shot out into the broad daylight.

Then I drew a long breath and looked about me. The first object that saluted my sight was Sailor Ben, four or five seats behind me, reading the Rivermouth Barnacle!

Reading wasn't an easy art for Sailor Ben; he grappled with the sense of a paragraph as if it were a polar-bear, and generally got the worst of it. On the present occasion he was having a hard struggle, judg-

ing by the way he worked his mouth and rolled his eyes. He had evidently not seen me. But what was he doing on the Boston train?

Without lingering to solve the question, I stole gently from my seat and passed into the forward car.

This was very awkward, having the Admiral on board. I couldn't understand it at all. Could it be possible that the old boy had got tired of land and was running away to sea himself? That was too absurd. I glanced nervously towards the car door now and then, half expecting to see him come after me.

We had passed one or two way-stations, and I had quieted down a good deal, when I began to feel as if somebody was looking at the back of my head. I turned round involuntarily, and there was Sailor Ben again, at the farther end of the car, wrestling with the Rivermouth Barnacle as before.

I began to grow very uncomfortable indeed. Was it by design or chance that he thus dogged my steps? If he was aware of my presence, why didn't he speak to me at once? Why did he steal round, making no sign, like a particularly unpleasant phantom? Maybe it *wasn't* Sailor Ben. I peeped at him slyly. There was no mistaking that tanned, genial phiz of his. Very odd he he didn't see me!

Literature, even in the mild form of a country newspaper, always had the effect of poppies on the Admiral. When I stole another glance in his direction his hat was tilted over his right eye in the most dissolute style, and the Rivermouth Barnacle lay in a confused heap beside him. He had succumbed. He was fast asleep. If he would only keep asleep until we reached our destination!

By and by I discovered that the rear car had been detached from the train at the last stopping-place. This accounted satisfactorily for Sailor Ben's singular movements, and considerably calmed my fears. Nevertheless, I did not like the aspect of things.

The Admiral continued to snooze like a good fellow, and was snoring melodiously as we glided at a slackened pace over a bridge and into Boston.

I grasped my pilgrim's bundle, and, hurrying out of the car, dashed up the first street that presented itself.

It was a narrow, noisy, zigzag street, crowded with trucks and obstructed with bales and boxes of merchandise. I didn't pause to breathe until I had placed a respectable distance between me and the railway station. By this time it was nearly twilight.

I had got into the region of dwelling-houses, and was about to seat myself on a doorstep to rest, when, lo! there was the Admiral trundling along on the opposite sidewalk, under a full spread of canvas, as he would have expressed it.

I was off again in an instant at a rapid pace; but in spite of all I could do he held his own without any perceptible exertion. He had a very ugly gait to get away from, the Admiral. I didn't dare to run, for fear of being mistaken for a thief, a suspicion which my bundle would naturally lend color to.

I pushed ahead, however, at a brisk trot, and must have got over one or two miles,—my pursuer neither gaining nor losing ground,—when I concluded to surrender at discretion. I saw that Sailor Ben was determined to have me, and, knowing my man, I knew that escape was highly improbable.

So I turned round and waited for him to catch up with me, which he did in a few seconds, looking rather sheepish at first.

"Sailor Ben," said I, severely, "do I understand that you are dogging my steps?"

"Well, little messmate," replied the Admiral, rubbing his nose, which he always did when he was disconcerted, "I *am* kind o' followin' in your wake."

"Under orders?"

"Under orders."

"Under the Captain's orders?"

"Sure-ly."

"In other words, my grandfather has sent you to fetch me back to Rivermouth?"

"That's about it," said the Admiral, with a burst of frankness.

"And I must go with you whether I want to or not?"

"The Capen's very identical words!"

There was nothing to be done. I bit my lips with suppressed anger, and signified that I was at his disposal, since I couldn't help it. The impression was very strong in my mind that the Admiral wouldn't hesitate to put me in irons if I showed signs of mutiny.

It was too late to return to Rivermouth that night,—a fact which I communicated to the old boy sullenly, inquiring at the same time what he proposed to do about it.

He said we would cruise about for some rations, and then make a night of it. I didn't condescend to reply, though I hailed the suggestion of something to eat with inward enthusiasm, for I had not taken enough food that day to keep life in a canary.

We wandered back to the railway station, in the waiting-room of which was a kind of restaurant presided over by a severe-looking young lady. Here we had a cup of coffee apiece, several tough doughnuts, and

some blocks of venerable sponge-cake. The young lady who attended on us, whatever her age was then, must have been a mere child when that sponge-cake was made.

The Admiral's acquaintance with Boston hotels was slight; but he knew of a quiet lodging-house near by, much patronized by sea captains, and kept by a former friend of his.

In this house, which had seen its best days, we were accommodated with a mouldy chamber containing two cot-beds, two chairs, and a cracked pitcher on a wash-stand. The mantel-shelf was ornamented with three big pink conch-shells, resembling pieces of petrified liver; and over these hung a cheap lurid print, in which a United States sloop-of-war was giving a British frigate particular fits. It is very strange how our own ships never seem to suffer any in these terrible engagements. It shows what a nation we are.

An oil-lamp on a deal-table cast a dismal glare over the apartment, which was cheerless in the extreme. I thought of our sitting-room at home, with its flowery wallpaper and gay curtains and soft lounges; I saw Major Elkanah Nutter (my grandfather's father) in powdered wig and Federal uniform, looking down benevolently from his guilt frame between the bookcases; I pictured the Captain and Miss Abigail sitting at the cosey round table in the moon-like glow of the astral lamp; and then I fell to wondering how they would receive me when I came back. I wondered if the Prodigal Son had any idea that his father was going to kill the fatted calf for him, and how he felt about it, on the whole.

Though I was very low in spirits, I put on a bold front to Sailor Ben, you will understand. To be caught and caged in this manner was a frightful shock to my vanity. He tried to draw me into conversation; but I answered in icy monosyllables. He again suggested we should make a night of it, and hinted broadly that he was game for any amount of riotous dissipation, even to the extent of going to see a play if I wanted to. I declined haughtily. I was dying to go.

He then threw out a feeler on the subject of dominoes and checkers, and observed in a general way that "seven up" was a capital game; but I repulsed him at every point.

I saw, that the Admiral was beginning to feel hurt by my systematic coldness. We had always been such hearty friends until now. It was too bad of me to fret that tender, honest old heart even for an hour. I really did love the ancient boy, and when,

in a disconsolate way, he ordered up a pitcher of beer, I unbent so far as to partake of some in a teacup. He recovered his spirits instantly, and took out his cuddy clay pipe for a smoke.

Between the beer and the soothing fragrance of the navy-plug, I fell into a pleasanter mood myself, and, it being too late now to go to the theatre, I condescended to say,—addressing the northwest corner of the ceiling,—that “seven up” was a capital game. Upon this hint the Admiral disappeared, and returned shortly with a very dirty pack of cards.

As we played, with varying fortunes, by the flickering flame of the lamp, he sipped his beer and became communicative. He seemed immensely tickled by the fact that I had come to Boston. It leaked out presently that he and the Captain had had a wager on the subject.

The discovery of my plans and who had discovered them were points on which the Admiral refused to throw any light. They had been discovered, however, and the Captain had laughed at the idea of my running away. Sailor Ben, on the contrary, had stoutly contended that I meant to slip cable and be off. Whereupon the Captain offered to bet him a dollar that I wouldn't go. And it was partly on account of this wager that Sailor Ben refrained from capturing me when he might have done so at the start.

Now, as the fare to and from Boston, with the lodging expenses, would cost him at least five dollars, I didn't see what he gained by winning the wager. The Admiral rubbed his nose violently when this view of the case presented itself.

I asked him why he didn't take me from the train at the first stopping-place and return to Rivermouth by the down train at 4.30. He explained; having purchased a ticket for Boston, he considered himself bound to the owners (the stockholders of the road) to fulfil his part of the contract! To use his own words, he had “shipped for the voyage.”

This struck me as being so deliciously funny, that after I was in bed and the light was out, I couldn't help laughing aloud once or twice. I suppose the Admiral must have thought I was meditating another escape, for he made periodical visits to my bed throughout the night, satisfying himself by kneading me all over that I hadn't evaporated.

I was all there the next morning, when Sailor Ben half awakened me by shouting merrily, “All hands on deck!” The words rang in my ears like a part of my own dream, for I was at that instant climbing up the side of the Rawlings to offer myself as cabin-boy.

The Admiral was obliged to shake me roughly two or three times before he could detach me from the dream. I opened my eyes with effort, and stared stupidly round the room. Bit by bit my real situation dawned on me. What a sickening sensation that is, when one is in trouble, to wake up feeling free for a moment, and then to find yesterday's sorrow all ready to go on again!

“Well, little messmate, how fares it?”

I was too much depressed to reply. The thought of returning to Rivermouth chilled me. How could I face Captain Nutter, to say nothing of Miss Abigail and Kitty? How the Temple Grammar School boys would look at me! How Conway and Seth Rodgers would exult over my mortification! And what if the Rev. Wibird Hawkins should allude to me in his next Sunday's sermon?

Sailor Ben was wise in keeping an eye on me, for after these thoughts took possession of my mind, I wanted only the opportunity to give him the slip.

The keeper of the lodgings did not supply meals to his guests; so we breakfasted at a small chophouse in a crooked street on our way to the cars. The city was not astir yet, and looked glum and careworn in the damp morning atmosphere.

Here and there as we passed along was a sharp-faced shop boy taking down shutters; and now and then we met a seedy man who had evidently spent the night in a doorway. Such early birds and a few laborers with their tin kettles were the only signs of life to be seen until we came to the station, where I insisted on paying for my own ticket. I didn't relish being conveyed from place to place, like a felon changing prisons, at somebody else's expense.

On entering the car I sank into a seat next the window, and Sailor Ben deposited himself beside me, cutting off all chance of escape.

The car filled up soon after this, and I wondered if there was anything in my mien that would lead the other passengers to suspect I was a boy who had run away and was being brought back.

A man in front of us—he was near-sighted, as I discovered later by his reading a guide-book with his nose—brought the blood to my cheeks by turning round and peering at me steadily. I rubbed a clear spot on the cloudy window-glass at my elbow, and looked out to avoid him.

There, in the travellers' room, was the severe-looking young lady piling up her blocks of sponge-cake in alluring pyramids and industriously intrenching herself behind a breastwork of squash-pie. I saw with cyn-

ical pleasure numerous victims walk up to the counter and recklessly sow the seeds of death in their constitutions by eating her doughnuts. I had got quite interested in her, when the whistle sounded and the train began to move.

The Admiral and I did not talk much on the journey. I stared out of the window most of the time, speculating as to the probable nature of the reception in store for me at the terminus of the road.

What would the Captain say? and Mr. Grimshaw, what would he do about it? Then I thought of Pepper Whitecomb. Dire was the vengeance I meant to wreak on Pepper, for who but he had betrayed me? Pepper alone had been the repository of my secret,—perfidious Pepper!

As we left station after station behind us, I felt less and less like encountering the members of our family. Sailor Ben fathomed what was passing in my mind, for he leaned over and said:—

"I don't think as the Capen will bear down very hard on you."

But it was n't that. It was n't the fear of any physical punishment that might be inflicted; it was a sense of my own folly that was creeping over me; for during the long, silent ride I had examined my conduct from every stand-point, and there was no view I could take of myself in which I did not look like a very foolish person indeed.

As we came within sight of the spires of Rivermouth, I would n't have cared if the up train, which met us outside the town had run into us and ended me.

Contrary to my expectation and dread, the Captain was not visible when we stepped from the cars. Sailor Ben glanced among the crowd of faces, apparently looking for him too. Conway was there,—he was always hanging about the station,—and if he had intimated in any way that he knew of my disgrace and enjoyed it, I should have walked into him, I am certain.

But this defiant feeling entirely deserted me by the time we reached the Nutter House. The Captain himself opened the door.

"Come on board, sir," said Sailor Ben, scraping his left foot and touching his hat sea-fashion.

My grandfather nodded to Sailor Ben, somewhat coldly I thought, and much to my astonishment kindly took me by the hand.

I was unprepared for this, and the tears, which no amount of severity would have wrung from me, welled up to my eyes.

The expression of my grandfather's face, as I glanced at it hastily, was grave and gentle; there was nothing in it of anger or reproach. I followed him into the sitting-

room and, obeying a motion of his hand, seated myself on the sofa. He remained standing by the round table for a moment, lost in thought, then leaned over and picked up a letter.

It was a letter with a great black seal.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH I LEAVE RIVERMOUTH.

A letter with a great black seal!

I knew then what had happened as well as I know it now. But which was it, father or mother? I do not like to look back to the agony and suspense of that moment.

My father had died at New Orleans during one of his weekly visits to the city. The letter bearing these tidings had reached Rivermouth the evening of my flight,—had passed me on the road by the down train.

I must turn back for a moment to that eventful evening. When I failed to make my appearance at supper, the Captain began to suspect that I had really started on my wild tour southward,—a conjecture which Sailor Ben's absence helped to confirm. I had evidently got off by the train and Sailor Ben had followed me.

There was no telegraphic communication between Boston and Rivermouth in those days; so my grandfather could do nothing but wait the result. Even if there had been another mail to Boston, he could not have availed himself of it, not knowing how to address a message to the fugitives. The post-office was naturally the last place either I or the Admiral would think of visiting.

My grandfather, however, was too full of trouble to allow this to add to his distress. He knew that the faithful old sailor would not let me come to any harm, and even if I had managed for the time being to elude him, was sure to bring me back sooner or later.

Our return, therefore, by the first train on the following day did not surprise him.

I was greatly puzzled, as I have said, by the gentle manner of his reception; but when we were alone together in the sitting-room, and he began slowly to unfold the letter, I understood it all. I caught a sight of my mother's handwriting in the superscription, and there was nothing left to tell me.

My grandfather held the letter a few seconds irresolutely, and then commenced reading it aloud; but he could get no further than the date.

"I can't read it, Tom," said the old gentleman, breaking down. "I thought I could."

He handed it to me. I took the letter

mechanically, and hurried away with it to my little room, where I had passed so many happy hours.

The week that followed the receipt of this letter is nearly a blank in my memory. I remember that the days appeared endless; that at times I could not realize the misfortune that had befallen us, and my heart upbraided me for not feeling a deeper grief; that a full sense of my loss would now and then sweep over me like an inspiration, and I would steal away to my chamber or wander forlornly about the gardens. I remember this, but little more.

As the days went by my first grief subsided, and in its place grew up a want which I have experienced at every step in life from boyhood to manhood. Often, even now, after all these years, when I see a lad of twelve or fourteen walking by his father's side, and glancing merrily up at his face, I turn and look after them, and am conscious that I have missed companionship most sweet and sacred.

I shall not dwell on this portion of my story. There were many tranquil, pleasant hours in store for me at that period, and I prefer to turn to them.

One evening the Captain came smiling into the sitting-room with an open letter in his hand. My mother had arrived at New York, and would be with us the next day. For the first time in weeks—years, it seemed to me—something of the old cheerfulness mingled with our conversation round the evening lamp. I was to go to Boston with the Captain to meet her and bring her home. I need not describe that meeting. With my mother's hand in mine once more, all the long years we had parted appeared like a dream. Very dear to me was the sight of that slender, pale woman passing from room to room, and lending a patient grace and beauty to the saddened life of the old house.

Everything was changed with us now. There were consultations with lawyers, and signing of papers, and correspondence; for my father's affairs had been left in great confusion. And when these were settled, the evenings were not long enough for us to hear all my mother had to tell of the scenes she had passed through in the ill-fated city.

Then there were old times to talk over, full of reminiscences of Aunt Chloe, and little Black Sam. Little Black Sam, by the by, had been taken by his master from my father's service ten months previously, and put on a sugar plantation near Baton Rouge. Not relishing the change, Sam had run away, and by some mysterious agency got into Canada, from which place he had

sent back several indecorous messages to his late owner. Aunt Chloe was still in New Orleans, employed as nurse in one of cholera hospital wards, and the Desmoulins, near neighbors of ours, had purchased the pretty stone house among the orange-trees.

How all these simple details interested me will be readily understood by any boy who has been long absent from home.

I was sorry when it became necessary to discuss questions more nearly affecting myself. I had been removed from school temporarily, but it was decided, after much consideration, that I should not return, the decision being left, in a manner, in my own hands.

The Captain wished to carry out his son's intention and send me to college, for which I was nearly fitted; but our means did not admit of this. The Captain, too, could ill afford to bear the expense, for his losses by the failure of the New Orleans business had been heavy. Yet he insisted on the plan, not seeing clearly what other disposal to make me.

In the midst of our discussions a letter came from my Uncle Snow, a merchant in New York, generously offering me a place in his counting-house. The case resolved itself into this: If I went to college, I should have to be dependent on Captain Nutter for several years, and at the end of the collegiate course would have no settled profession. If I accepted my uncle's offer, I might hope to work my way to independence without loss of time. It was hard to give up the long-cherished dream of being a Harvard boy; but I gave it up.

The decision once made, it was Uncle Snow's wish that I should enter his counting-house immediately. The cause of my good uncle's haste was this,—he was afraid that I would turn out to be a poet before he he could make a merchant of me. His fears were based upon the fact that I had published in the Rivermouth Barnacle some verses addressed in a familiar manner "To the Moon." Now, the idea of a boy, with his living to get, placing himself in communication with the Moon, struck the mercantile mind as monstrous. It was not only a bad investment, it was lunacy.

We adopted Uncle Snow's views so far as to accede to his proposition forthwith. My mother, I neglected to say, was also to reside in New York.

I shall not draw a picture of Pepper Whitcomb's disgust when the news was imparted to him, nor attempt to paint Sailor Ben's distress at the prospect of losing his little messmate.

In the excitement of preparing for the

journey I didn't feel any very deep regret myself. But when the moment came for leaving, and I saw my small trunk lashed up behind the carriage, then the pleasantness of the old life and a vague dread of the new came over me, and a mist filled my eyes, shutting out a group of schoolfellows, including all the members of the Centipede Club, who had come down to the house to see me off.

As the carriage swept round the corner, I leaned out of the window to take a last look at Sailor Ben's cottage, and there was the Admiral's flag flying at half-mast.

So I left Rivermouth, little dreaming that I was not to see the old place again for many and many a year.

CHAPTER XXII.

EXEUNT OMNES.

With the close of my school-days at Rivermouth this modest chronicle ends

The new life upon which I entered, the new friends and foes I encountered on the road, and what I did and what I did not, are matters that do not come within the scope of these pages. But before I write *Finis* to the record as it stands, before I leave it,—feeling as if I were once more going away from my boyhood,—I have a word or two to say concerning a few of the personages who have figured in the story, if you will allow me to call Gypsy a personage.

I am sure that the reader who has followed me thus far will be willing to hear what became of her, and Sailor Ben and Miss Abigail and the Captain.

First about Gypsy. A month after my departure from Rivermouth the Captain informed me by letter that he had parted with the little mare, according to agreement. She had been sold to the ring-master of a travelling circus (I had stipulated on this disposal of her), and was about to set out on her travels. She did not disappoint my glowing anticipations, but became quite a celebrity in her way,—by dancing the polka to slow music on a pine-board ball-room constructed for the purpose.

I chanced once, a long while afterwards, to be in a country town where her troupe was giving exhibitions; I even read the gaudily illumined show-bill, setting forth the accomplishments of

The far-famed Arabian Trick Pony,

ZULEIKA!!

FORMERLY OWNED BY

**The Prince Shaz-Zaman of
Damascus.**

—but failed to recognize my dear little Mustang girl behind those high-sounding titles, and so, alas! did not attend the performance. I hope all the praises she received and all the spangled trappings she wore did not spoil her; but I am afraid they did, for she was always over much given to the vanities of this world!

Miss Abigail regulated the domestic destinies of my grandfather's household until the day of her death, which Dr. Theophilus Fredrick solemnly averred was hastened by the inveterate habit she had contracted of swallowing unknown quantities of hot-drops whenever she fancied herself out of sorts. Eighty-seven empty phials were found in a bonnet-box on a shelf in her bedroom closet.

The old house became very lonely when the family got reduced to Captain Nutter and Kitty; and when Kitty passed away, my grandfather divided his time between Rivermouth and New York.

Sailor Ben did not long survive his little Irish lass, as he always fondly called her. At his demise, which took place about six years since, he left his property in trust to the managers of a "Home for Aged Mariners." In his will, which was a very whimsical document—written by himself, and worded with much shrewdness, too,—he warned the Trustees that when he got "aloft" he intended to keep his "weather eye" on them, and should send "a spiritual shot across their bows" and bring them to, if they didn't treat the Aged Mariners handsomely.

He also expressed a wish to have his body stitched up in a shotted hammock and dropped into the harbor, but as he did not strenuously insist on this and as it was not in accordance with my grandfather's preconceived notions of Christian burial, the Admiral was laid to rest beside Kitty, in the Old South Burying Ground, with an anchor that would have delighted him neatly carved on his headstone.

I am sorry the fire has gone out in the old ship's stove in that sky-blue cottage at the head of the wharf; I am sorry they have taken down the flag-staff and painted over the funny port-holes; for I loved the old cabin as it was. They might have let it alone!

For several months after leaving Rivermouth I carried on a voluminous correspondence with Pepper Whitcomb; but it gradually dwindled down to a single letter a month, and then to none at all. But while he remained at the Temple Grammar School he kept me advised of the current gossip of the town and the doings of the Centipedes.

As one by one the boys left the academy, —Adams, Harris, Marden, Blake and Lang-

don,—to seek their fortunes elsewhere, there was less to interest me in the old seaport; and when Pepper himself went to Philadelphia to read law, I had no one to give me an inkling of what was going on.

There wasn't much to go on, to be sure. Great events no longer considered it worth their while to honor so quiet a place. One Fourth of July the Temple Grammar School burnt down,—set on fire, it was supposed, by an eccentric squib that was seen to bolt into an upper window,—and Mr. Grimshaw retired from public life, married, "and lived happily ever after," as the story-books say.

The Widow Conway, I am able to state, did not succeed in enslaving Mr. Meeks, the apothecary, who united himself clandestinely to one of Miss Dorothy Gibbs's young ladies, and lost the patronage of Primrose Hall in consequence.

Young Conway went into the grocery business with his ancient chum, Rogers,—ROGERS & CONWAY! I read the sign only last summer when I was down in Rivermouth, and had half a mind to pop into the shop and shake hands with him, and ask him if he wanted to fight. I contented my-

self, however, with flattening my nose against his dingy shop-window, and beheld Conway, in red whiskers and blue overalls, weighing out sugar for a customer,—giving him short weight, I'll bet anything!

I have reserved my pleasantest word for the last. It is touching the Captain. The Captain is still hale and rosy, and if he doesn't relate his exploit in the war of 1812 as spiritedly as he used to, he makes up by relating it more frequently and telling it differently every time! He passes his winters in New York and his summers in the Nutter House, which threatens to be a hard nut for the destructive gentleman with the scythe and the hour-glass, for the seaward gable has not yielded a clapboard to the east-wind these twenty years. The Captain had now become the Oldest Inhabitant in Rivermouth, and so I don't laugh at the Oldest Inhabitant any more, but pray in my heart that he may occupy the post of honor for half a century to come!

So ends the Story of a Bad Boy,—but not such a very bad boy, as I told you to begin with.

THE END.

ROBERTSON'S CHEAP SERIES.

POPULAR READING AT POPULAR PRICES.

BEING A BOY.

BY

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER,

AUTHOR OF "MY SUMMER IN A GARDEN," "BACKLOG STUDIES," "BADDECK AND THAT SORT
OF THING," "SAUSATERING," ETC.

TORONTO:

J. ROSS ROBERTSON, 27 YONGE STREET.

1878.

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BEING A BOY.

CHAPTER I.

BEING A BOY.

One of the best things in the world is to be a boy; it requires no experience, though it needs some practice to be a good one. The disadvantage of the position is that it does not last long enough; it is soon over; just as you get used to being a boy, you have to be something else, with a good deal more work to do and not half so much fun. And yet every boy is anxious to be a man, and is very uneasy with the restrictions that are put upon him as a boy. Good fun as it is to yoke up the calves and play work, there is not a boy on a farm but would rather drive a yoke of oxen at real work. What a glorious feeling it is, indeed, when a boy is for the first time given the long whip and permitted to drive the oxen, walking by their side, swinging the long lash, and shouting "Gee, Buck!" "Haw, Golden!" "Whoa, Bright!" and all the rest of that remarkable language, until he is red in the face, and all the neighbors for half a mile are aware that something unusual is going on. If I were a boy, I am not sure but I would rather drive the oxen than have a birthday.

The proudest day of my life was one day when I rode on the neap of the cart, and drove the oxen, all alone, with a load of apples to the cider-mill. I was so little, that it was a wonder that I didn't fall off, and get under the broad wheels. Nothing could make a boy, who cared anything for his appearance, feel flatter than to be run over by the broad tire of cart-wheel. But I never heard of one who was, and I don't believe one ever will be. As I said, it was a great day for me, but I don't remember that the oxen cared much about it. They sagged along in their great clumsy way, switching their tails in my face occasionally, and now and then giving a lurch to this or that side of the road, attracted by a choice tuft of grass. And then I "came the Julius Caesar" over them, if you will allow me to use such a slang expression, a liberty I never should

permit you. I don't know that Julius Caesar ever drove cattle, though he must often have seen the peasants from the Campagna "haw" and "gee" them round the Forum (of course in Latin, a language that those cattle understood as well as ours do English); but what I mean is, that I stood up and "hollored" with all my might, as everybody does with oxen, as if they were born deaf, and wacked them with the long lash over the head, just as the big folks did when they drove. I think now that it was a cowardly thing to crack the patient old fellows over the face and eyes, and make them wink in their meek manner. If I am ever a boy again on a farm, I shall speak gently to the oxen, and not go screaming round the farm like a crazy man; and I shall not hit them a cruel cut with the lash every few minutes, because it looks big to do so and I cannot think of anything else to do. I never liked lickings myself, and I don't know why an ox should like them, especially as he cannot reason about the moral improvement he is to get out of them.

Speaking in Latin reminds me that I once taught my cows Latin. I don't mean that I taught them to read it, for it is very difficult to teach a cow to read Latin or any other of the dead languages,—a cow cares more for her cud than she does for all the classics put together. But if you begin early you can teach a cow, or a calf (if you can teach a calf anything, which I doubt,) Latin as well as English. There were ten cows, which I had to escort to and from pasture night and morning. To these cows I gave the names of the Roman numerals, beginning with Unus and Duo, and going up to Decem. Decem was of course the biggest cow of the party, or at least she was the ruler of the others, and had the place of honor in the stable and everywhere else. I admire cows, and especially the exactness with which they define their social position. In this case, Decem could "lick" Novem, and Novem could "lick" Octo, and so on down to Unus, who couldn't lick anybody, except her own calf. I suppose I ought to

have called the weakest cow Una instead of Unus, considering her sex; but I didn't care much to teach the cows the declensions of adjectives, in which I was not very well up myself; and besides it would be of little use to a cow. People who devout themselves too severely to study of the classics are apt to become dried up; and you should never do anything to dry up a cow. Well, these ten cows knew their names after a while, at least they appeared to, and would take their places as I called them. At least, if Octo attempted to get before Novem in going through the bars (I have heard people speak of a "pair of bars" when there were six or eight of them), or into the stable, the matter of precedence was settled then and there, and once settled there was no dispute about it afterwards. Novem either put her horns into Octo's ribs, and Octo shambled to one side, or else the two locked horns and tried the game of push and gore until one gave up. Nothing is stricter than the etiquette of a party of cows. There is nothing in royal courts equal to it; rank is exactly settled, and the same individuals always have the precedence. You know that at Windsor Castle, if the Royal Three-Ply Silver Stick should happen to get in front of the Most Royal Double-and-Twisted Golden Rod, when the court is going in to dinner, something so dreadful would happen that we don't dare to think of it. It is certain that the soup would get cold while the Golden Rod was pitching the Silver Stick out of the Castle window into the moat, and perhaps the island of Great Britain itself would split in two. But the people are very careful that it never shall happen, so we shall probably never know what the effect would be. Among cows, as I say, the question is settled in short order, and in a different manner from what it sometimes is in other society. It is said that in other society there is sometimes a great scramble for the first place, for the leadership as it is called, and that women, and men too, fight for what is called position; and in order to be first they will injure their neighbors by telling stories about them and by backbiting, which is the meanest kind of biting there is, not excepting the bite of fleas. But in cow society there is nothing of this detraction in order to get the first place at the crib, or the farther stall in the stable. If the question arises, the cows turn in, horns and all, and settle it with one square fight, and that ends it. I have often admired this trait in cows.

Besides Latin, I used to try to teach the cows a little poetry, and it is a very good plan. It does not do the cows much good, but is very good exercise for a boy farmer.

I used to commit to memory as good short poems as I could find (the cows liked to listen to Thanatopsis about as well as anything), and repeat them when I went to the pasture, and as I drove the cows home through the sweet ferns and down the rocky slopes. It improves a boy's elocution a great deal more than driving oxen.

It is a fact, also, that if a boy repeats Thanatopsis while he is milking, that operation acquires a certain dignity.

CHAPTER II.

THE BOY AS A FARMER.

Boys in general would be very good farmers if the current notions about farming were not so very different from those they entertain. What passes for laziness is very often an unwillingness to farm in a particular way. For instance, some morning in early summer John is told to catch the sorrel mare, harness her into the spring wagon, and put in the buffalo and the best whip, for father is obliged to drive over to the "Corners, to see a man" about some cattle, to talk with the road commissioner, to go to the store for the "women folks" and to attend to other important business; and very likely he will not be back till sundown. It must be very pressing business, for the old gentleman drives off in this way somewhere almost every pleasant day, and appears to have a great deal on his mind.

Meantime, he tells John that he can play ball after he has done up the chores. As if the chores would ever be "done up" on a farm. He is first to clean out the horse-stables; then to take a bill-hook and cut down the thistles and weeds from the fence corners in the home mowing-lot and along the road towards the village; to dig up the docks round the garden patch; to weed out the beet-bed; to hoe the early potatoes; to rake the sticks and leaves out of the front yard; in short, there is work enough laid out for John to keep him busy, it seems to him, till he comes of age; and at half an hour to sundown he is to go for the cows, and, mind he don't run 'em!

"Yes, sir," says John, "is that all?"

"Well, if you get through in good season, you might pick over those potatoes in the cellar; they are sprouting; they ain't fit to eat."

John is obliged to his father, for if there is any sort of chore more cheerful to a boy than mother, on a pleasant day, it is rubbing the sprouts off potatoes in a dark cellar. And the old gentleman mounts his wagon and drives away down the enticing road, with the dog bounding along beside

the wagon, and refusing to come back at John's call. John half wishes he were the dog. The dog knows the part of farming that suits him. He likes to run along the road and see all the dogs and other people, and he likes best of all to lie on the store steps at the Corners—while his master's horse is dozing at the post and his master is talking politics in the store—with the other dogs of his acquaintance, snapping at mutually annoying flies and indulging in that delightful dog gossip which is expressed by a wag of the tail and a sniff of the nose. Nobody knows how many dog's characters are destroyed in this gossip; or how a dog may be able to insinuate suspicion by a wag of the tail as a man can by a shrug of the shoulders, or sniff a slander as a man can suggest one by raising his eyebrows.

John looks after the old gentleman driving off in state, with the odorous buffalo-robe and the new whip, and he thinks that is the sort of farming he would like to do. And he cries after his departing parent,—

"Say, Father, can't I go over to the farther pasture and salt the cattle?" John knows that he could spend half a day very pleasantly in going over to that pasture, looking for bird's nests and shying at red squirrels on the way, and who knows but he might "see" a sucker in the meadow brook, and perhaps get a "jab" at him with a sharp stick. He knows a hole where there is a whopper; and one of his plans in life is to go some day and snare him, and bring him home in triumph. It therefore is strongly impressed upon his mind that the cattle want salting. But his father without turning his head, replies,—

"No, they don't need salting any more'n you do!" And the old equipage goes rattling down the road, and John whistles his disappointment. When I was a boy on a farm, and I suppose it is so now, cattle were never salted half enough.

John goes to his chores, and gets through the stable as soon as he can, for that must be done; but when it comes to the out-door work, that rather drags. There are so many things to distract the attention,—a chipmunk in the fence, a bird on a near tree, and a hen-hawk circling high in the air over the barn-yard. John loses a little time in stoning the chipmunk, which rather likes the sport, and in watching the bird to find out where its nest is; and he convinces himself that he ought to watch the hawk, lest it pounce upon the chickens, and therefore, with an easy conscience, he spends fifteen minutes in hallooing to that distant bird, and follows it away out of sight over the woods, and then wishes it would come back again. And then a carriage with two

horses, and a trunk on behind, goes along the road; and there is a girl in the carriage who looks out at John, who is suddenly aware that his trousers are patched on each knee and in two places behind; and he wonders if she is rich, and whose name is on the trunk, and how much the horses cost, and whether that nice-looking man is the girl's father, and if that boy on the seat with the driver is her brother, and if he has to do chores; and as the gay sight disappears John falls to thinking about the great world beyond the farm, of cities, and people who are always dressed up, and a great many other things of which he has a very dim notion. And then a boy, whom John knows, rides by in a wagon with his father, and the boy makes a face at John, and John returns the greeting with a twist of his own visage and some symbolic gestures. All these things take time. The work of cutting down the big weeds gets on slowly, although it is not very disagreeable, or would not be if it were play. John imagines that yonder big thistle is some whiskered villain, of whom he has read in a fairy book, and he advances on him with "Die, ruffian!" and slashes off his head with the bill-hook; or he charges upon the rows of mullein-stalks as if they were rebels in regimental ranks, and hews them down without mercy. What fun it might be if there were only another boy there to help. But even war, single-handed gets to be tiresome. It is dinner-time before John finishes the weeds, and it is cow-time before John has made much impression on the garden.

This garden John has no fondness for. He would rather hoe corn all day than work in it. Father seems to think that it is easy work that John can do, because it is near the house! John's continual plan in this life is to go fishing. When there comes a rainy day, he attempts to carry it out. But ten chances to one his father has different views. As it rains so that work cannot be done out doors, it is a good time to work in the garden. He can run into the house between the showers. John accordingly detests the garden; and the only time he works briskly in it is when he has a stent set, to do so much weeding before the Fourth of July. If he is spry he can make an extra holiday the Fourth and the day after. Two days of gunpowder and ball-playing! When I was a boy, I supposed there was some connection between such and such an amount of work done on the farm and our national freedom. I doubted if there could be any Fourth of July if my stent was not done. I, at least, worked for my Independence.

CHAPTER III.

THE DELIGHTS OF FARMING.

There are so many bright spots in the life of a farm-boy, that I sometimes think I should like to live the life over again; I should almost be willing to be a girl if it were not for the chores.* There is a great comfort to a boy in the amount of work he can get rid of doing. It is sometimes astonishing how slow he can go on an errand, he who leads the school in a race. The world is new and interesting to him, and there is so much to take his attention off, when he is sent to do anything. Perhaps he couldn't explain, himself, why, when he is sent to the neighbour's after yeast, he stops to stone the frogs; he is not exactly cruel, but he wants to see if he can hit 'em. No other living thing can go so slow as a boy sent an errand. His legs seem to be lead, unless he happens to espy a woodchuck in an adjoining lot, when he gives chase to it like a deer; and it is a curious fact about boys, that two will be a great deal slower in doing anything than one, and that the more you have help on a piece of work the less is accomplished. Boys have a great power of helping each other to do nothing; and they are so innocent about it and unconscious. "I went as quick as ever I could," says the boy: his father asks him why he didn't stay all night, when he has been absent three hours on a ten-minute errand. The sarcasm has no effect on the boy.

Going after the cows was a serious thing in my day. I had to climb a hill, which was covered with wild strawberries in the season. Could any boy pass by those ripe berries? And then in the fragrant hill pasture there were beds of wintergreen with red berries, tufts of columbine, roots of sassafras to be dug, and dozens of things good to eat or to smell, that I could not resist. It sometimes even lay in my way to climb a tree to look for a crow's nest, or to swing in the top, and to try if I could see the steeple of the village church. It became very important sometimes for me to see that steeple; and in the midst of my investigations the tin horn would blow a great blast from the farmhouse, which would send a cold chill down my back on the hottest days. I knew what it meant. It had a frightfully impatient quaver in it, not at all like the sweet note that called us to dinner from the hay-field. It said, "Why on earth doesn't that boy come home? It is almost dark, and the cows ain't milked!" And that was the time the cows had to start into a brisk pace and make up for lost time. I wonder if any boy who ever drove the cows home late, who did

not say that the cows were at the very farther end of the pasture, and that "Old Brindle" was hidden in the woods, and he couldn't find her for ever so long! The brindle cow is the boy's scape-goat, many a time.

No other boy knows how to appreciate a holiday as the farm-boy does; and his best ones are of a peculiar kind. Going fishing is of course one sort. The excitement of rigging up the tackle, digging the bait, and the anticipation of great luck; these are pure pleasures, enjoyed because they are rare. Boys who can go a-fishing any time care but little for it. Tramping all day through bush and brier, fighting flies and mosquitoes, and branches that tangle the line, and snags that break the hook, and returning home late and hungry, with wet feet and a string of speckled trout on a willow twig, and having the family crowd out at the kitchen door to look at 'em, and say, "Pretty well done for you, bub; did you catch that big one yourself?"—this is also pure happiness, the like of which the boy will never have again, not if he comes to be selectman and deacon and to "keep store."

But the holidays I recall with delight were the two days in spring and fall, when we went to the distant pasture-land, in a neighboring town, maybe, to drive thither the young cattle and colts, and to bring them back again. It was a wild and rocky upland where our great pasture was, many miles from home, the road to it running by a brawling river, and up a dashing brook-side among great hills. What a day's adventure it was! It was like a journey to Europe. The night before, I could scarcely sleep for thinking of it, and there was no trouble about getting me up at sunrise that morning. The breakfast was eaten, the luncheon was packed in a large basket, with bottles of root beer and a jug of switchel, which packing I superintended with the greatest interest; and then the cattle were to be collected for the march, and the horses hitched up. Did I shirk any duty? Was I slow? I think not. I was willing to run my legs off after the frisky steers, who seemed to have an idea they were going on a lark, and frolicked about, dashing into all gates, and through all bars except the right ones; and how cheerfully I did yell at them; it was a glorious chance to "holler," and I have never since heard any public speaker on the stump or at camp-meeting who could make more noise. I have often thought it fortunate that the amount of noise in a boy does not increase in proportion to his size; if it did the world could not contain it.

The whole day was full of excitement and of freedom. We were away from the farm,

* Chores,—small work of a domestic kind.

* A beverage made of molasses and water.

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which to a boy is one of the best parts of farming; we saw other farms and other people at work; I had the pleasure of marching along, and swinging my whip, past boys whom I knew, who were picking up stones. Every turn of the road, every bend and rapid of the river, the great boulders by the wayside, the watering-troughs, the giant pine that had been struck by lightning, the mysterious covered bridge over the river where it was most swift and rocky and foamy, the chance eagle in the blue sky, the sense of going somewhere,—why, as I recall all these things I feel that even the Prince Imperial, as he used to dash on horseback through the Bois de Boulogne, with fifty mounted hussars clattering at his heels, and crowds of people cheering, could not have been as happy as was I, a boy in short jacket and shorter pantaloons, trudging in the dust that day behind the steers and colts, cracking my black-stock whip.

I wish the journey would never end; but at last, by noon, we reach the pastures and turn in the herd; and after making the tour of the lots to make sure there are no breaks in the fences, we take our luncheon from the wagon and eat it under the trees by the spring. This is the supreme moment of the day. This is the way to live; this is like the Swiss Family Robinson, and all the rest of my delightful acquaintances in romance. Baked beans, rye-and-indian bread (moist, remember), doughnuts and cheese, pie, and root beer. What richness! You may live to dine at Delmonico's, or, if those Frenchmen do not eat each other up, at Philippe's, in the Rue Montorgueil in Paris, where the dear old Thackeray used to eat as good a dinner as anybody; but you will get there neither doughnuts, nor pie, nor root beer, nor anything so good as that luncheon at noon in the old pasture, high among the Massachusetts hills! Nor will you ever, if you live to be the oldest boy in the world, have any holiday equal to the one I have described. But I always regretted that I did not take along a fish-line, just to "throw in" the brook we passed. I know there were trout there.

CHAPTER IV.

NO FARMING WITHOUT A BOY.

Say what you will about the general usefulness of boys, it is my impression that a farm without a boy would very soon come to grief. What the boy does is the life of the farm. He is the factotum, always in demand, always expected to do the thousand indispensable things that nobody else will do. Upon him fall all the odds and ends,

the most difficult things. After everybody else is through, he has to finish up. His work is like a woman's,—perpetual waiting on others. Everybody knows how much easier it is to eat a good dinner than it is to wash the dishes afterwards. Consider what a boy on a farm is required to do; things that must be done, or life would actually stop.

It is understood, in the first place, that he is to do all the errands, to go to the store, to the post-office, and to carry all sorts of messages. If he had as many legs as a centipede, they would tire before night. His two short limbs seem to him entirely inadequate to the task. He would like to have as many legs as a wheel has spokes, and rotate about in the same way. This he sometimes tries to do; and people who have seen him "turning cart-wheels" along the side of the road have supposed that he was amusing himself, and idling his time; he was only trying to invent a new mode of locomotion, so that he could economize his legs and do his errands with greater despatch. He practices standing on his head, in order to accustom himself to any position. Leap-frog is one of his methods of getting over the ground quickly. He would willingly go an errand any distance if he could leap-frog it with a few other boys. He has a natural genius for combining pleasure with business. This is the reason why, when he is sent to the spring for a pitcher of water, and the family are waiting at the dinner-table, he is absent so long; for he stops to poke the frog that sits on the stone, or, if there is a penstock, to put his hand over the spout and squirt the water a little while. He is the one who spreads the grass when the men have cut it; he mows it away in the barn; he rides the horse to cultivate the corn, up and down the hot, weary rows; he picks up the potatoes when they are dug; he drives the cows night and morning; he brings wood and water and splits kindling; he gets up the horse and puts out the horse; whether he is in the house or out of it, there is always something for him to do. Just before school in winter he shovels paths; in summer he turns the grindstone. He knows where there are lots of wintergreens and sweet flag-root, but instead of going for them, he is to stay indoors and pare apples and stone raisins and pound something in a mortar. And yet, with his mind full of schemes of what he would like to do, and his hands full of occupations, he is an idle boy who has nothing to busy himself with but school and chores! He would gladly do all the work if somebody else would do the chores, he thinks, and yet I doubt if any boy ever amounted to anything in the world,

or was of much use as a man, who did not enjoy the advantages of a liberal education in the way of chores.

A boy on a farm is nothing without his pets; at least a dog, and probably rabbits, chickens, ducks, and guinea-hens. A guinea-hen suits a boy. It is entirely useless, and makes a more disagreeable noise than a Chinese gong. I once domesticated a young fox which a neighbor had caught. It is a mistake to suppose the fox cannot be tamed. Jacko was a very clever little animal, and behaved, in all respects, with propriety. He kept Sunday as well as any day, and all the ten commandments that he could understand. He was a very graceful playfellow, and seemed to have an affection for me. He lived in a wood-pile, in the door yard, and when I lay down at the entrance to his house and called him, he would come out and sit on his tail and lick my face just like a grown person. I taught him a great many tricks and all the virtues. That year I had a large number of hens, and Jacko went about among them with the most perfect indifference, never looking on them to lust after them, as I could see, and never touching an egg or a feather. So excellent was his reputation that I would have trusted him in the hen-roost in the dark without counting the hens. In short, he was domesticated, and I was fond of him and very proud of him, exhibiting him to all our visitors as an example of what affectionate treatment would do in subduing the brute instincts. I preferred him to my dog, whom I had, with much patience, taught to go up a long hill alone and surround the cows, and drive them home from the remote pasture. He liked the fun of it at first, but by and by he seemed to get the notion that it was a "chore," and when I whistled for him to go for the cows, he would turn tail and run the other way, and the more I whistled and threw stones at him the faster he would run. His name was Turk, and I should have sold him if he had not been the kind of dog that nobody will buy. I suppose he was not a cow-dog, but what they call a sheep-dog. At least, when he got big enough, he used to get into the pasture and chase the sheep to death. That was the way he got into trouble, and lost his valuable life. A dog is of great use on a farm, and that is the reason a boy likes him. He is good to bite peddlers and small children, and run out and yelp at wagons that pass by, and to howl all night when the moon shines. And yet, if I were a boy again, the first thing I would have should be a dog; for dogs are great companions, and as active and spry as a boy at doing nothing. They are also good to bark at woodchuck-holes.

A good dog will bark at a woodchuck-hole long after the animal has retired to a remote part of his residence, and escaped by another hole. This deceives the woodchuck. Some of the most delightful hours of my life have been spent in hiding and waiting the hole where the dog was not. When an exquisite thrill ran through my frame when the timid nose appeared, was withdrawn, poked out again, and finally followed by the entire animal, who looked cautiously about and then hopped away to feed on the clover. At that moment I rushed in, occupied the "home base," yelled to Turk, and then danced with delight at the combat between the spunky woodchuck and the dog. They were about the same size, but science and civilization won the day. I did not reflect then that it would have been more in the interest of civilization if the woodchuck had killed the dog. It do not know why it is that boys so like to hunt and kill animals; but the excuse that I gave in this case for the murder was, that the woodchuck ate the clover and trod it down; and, in fact, was a woodchuck. It was not till long after that I learned with surprise that he is a rodent mammal, of the species *Arctomys monax*, is called at the West a ground-hog, and is eaten by people of color with great relish.

But I have forgotten my beautiful fox. Jacko continued to deport himself well until the young chickens came; he was actually cured of the fox vice of chicken-stealing. He used to go with me about the coops, pricking up his ears in an intelligent manner, with a demure eye and the most virtuous droop of the tail. Charming fox! If he had held out a little while longer, I should have put him into a Sunday-school book. But I began to miss chickens. They disappeared mysteriously in the night. I would not suspect Jacko at first, for he looked so honest, and in the day-time seemed to be as much interested in the chickens as I was. But one morning, when I went to call him, I found feathers at the entrance of his hole—chicken feathers. He couldn't deny it. He was a thief. His fox nature had come out under severe temptation. And he died an unnatural death. He had a thousand virtues and one crime. But that crime stuck at the foundation of society. He deceived and stole; he was a liar and a thief, and no pretty ways could hide the fact. His intelligent, bright face couldn't save him. If he had been honest, he might have grown up to be a large, ornamental fox.

CHAPTER V.

THE BOY'S SUNDAY.

Sunday in the New England hill towns used to begin Saturday night at sundown, and the sun is lost to sight behind the hills there before it has set by the almanac. I remember that we used to go by the almanac Saturday night and by visible disappearance Sunday night. On Saturday night we very slowly yielded to the influences of the holy time, which were settling down upon us, and submitted to the ablutions which were as inevitable as Sunday; but when the sun (and it never moved so slowly) set behind the hills Sunday night, the effect upon the watching boy was like a shock from a galvanic battery; something flashed through all his limbs and set them in motion, and no "play" ever seemed so sweet to him as that between sundown and dark Sunday night. This, however, was on the supposition that he had conscientiously kept Sunday, and had not gone in swimming and got drowned. This keeping of Saturday night instead of Sunday night we did not very well understand; but it seemed, on the whole, a good thing that we should rest Saturday night when we were tired, and play Sunday night when we were rested. I supposed, however, that it was an arrangement made to suit the big boys who wanted to go "courting" Sunday night. Certainly they were not to be blamed, for Sunday was the day when pretty girls were most fascinating, and I have never since seen any so lovely as those who used to sit in the gallery and in the singers' seats in the bare old meeting-houses.

Sunday to the country farmer boy was hardly the relief that it was to the other members of the family: for the same chores must be done that day as on others, and he could not divert his mind with whistling, d-springs, or sending the dog into the river after sticks. He had to submit, in the first place, to the restraint of shoes and stockings. He read in the Old Testament that when Moses came to holy ground he put off his shoes; but the boy was obliged to put his on, upon the holy day, not only to go to meeting, but while he sat at home. Only the emancipated country boy, who is as agile on his bare feet as a young kid, and rejoices in the pressure of the warm soft earth, knows what a hardship it is to tie on stiff shoes. The monks who put peas in their shoes as a penance do not suffer more than the country boy in his penitential Sunday shoes. I recall the celerity with which he used to kick them off at sundown.

Sunday morning was not an idle one for the farmer-boy. He must rise tolerably

early, for the cows were to be milked and driven to pasture; family prayers were a little longer than on other days; there were the Sunday-school verses to be re-learned, for they did not stay in mind over night; perhaps the wagon was to be greased before the neighbors began to drive by; and the horse was to be caught out of the pasture, shod home bare-back, and harnessed! This catching the horse, perhaps two of them, was very good fun usually, and would have broken the Sunday if the horse had not been wanted for taking the family to meeting. It was so peaceful and still in the pasture on Sunday morning, but the horses were never so playful, the colts never so frisky. Round and round the lot the boy went calling in an entreating Sunday voice, "jock, jock, jock, jock," and shaking his salt-dish, while the horses, with heads erect and shaking tails and flashing heels, dashed from corner to corner, and gave the boy a pretty good race before he could coax the nose of one of them into his dish. The boy got angry, and came very near saying "dum it," but he rather enjoyed the fun after all.

The boy remembers how his mother's anxiety was divided between the set of his turn-over collar, the parting of his hair, and his memory of the Sunday-school verses, and what a wild confusion there was through the house in getting off for meeting, and how he was kept running hither and thither, to get the hymn-book, or a palm leaf fan, or the best whip, or to pick from the Sunday part of the garden the bunch of caraway-seed. Already the deacon's mare, with a wagon-load of the deacon's folks, had gone shambling past, head and tail drooping, clumsy hoofs kicking up clouds of dust, while the good deacon sat jerking the reins, in an automatic way, and the "women-folks" patiently saw the dust settle upon their best summer finery. Wagon after wagon went along the sandy road, and when our boy's family started, they became part of a long procession, which sent up a mile of dust and a pungent, if not mousy smell of buffalo-ropes. There were many horses in the train which had to be held in, for it was neither etiquette nor decent to pass anybody on Sunday. It was a great delight to the farmer-boy to see all this procession of horses, and to exchange shy winks with the other boys, who leaned over the wagon-seats for that purpose. Occasionally a boy rode behind with his back to the family, and his pantomime was always something wonderful to see, and was considered very daring and wicked.

The meeting-house which our boy remembers was a high square building, without a steeple. Within it had a lofty pulpit, with

doors underneath and closets where sacred things were kept, and where the thithing-men were supposed to imprison bad boys. The pews were square, with seats facing each other, those on one side low for the children, and all with hinges, so that they could be raised when the congregation stood up for prayers and leaned over the backs of the pews, as horses meet each other across a pasture fence. After prayers these seats used to be slammed down with a long-continued clatter, which seemed to the boys about the best part of the exercise. The galleries were very high, and the singers' seats, where the pretty girls sat, were the most conspicuous of all. To sit in the gallery away from the family, was a privilege not often granted to the boy. The thithing-man who carried a long rod and kept order in the house, and out doors at noontime, sat in the gallery, and visited any boy who whispered or found curious passages in the Bible and showed them to another boy. It was an awful moment when the bushy-headed thithing-man approached a boy in sermon-time. The eyes of the whole congregation were on him, and he could feel the guilt ooze out of his burning face.

At noon was Sunday-school, and after that, before the afternoon service, in summer, the boys had a little time to eat their luncheon together at the watering-trough, where some of the elders were likely to be gathered, talking very solemnly about cattle; or they were over to a neighboring barn to see the calves, or they slipped off down the roadside to a place where they could dig sassafras or the root of the sweet-flag, —roots very fragrant in the mind of many a boy with religious associations to this day. There was often an odor of sassafras in the afternoon service. It used to stand in my mind as a substitute for the Old Testament incense of the Jews. Something in the same way the big bass-viol in the choir took the place of "David's harp of solemn sound."

The going home from meeting was more cheerful and lively than the coming to it. There was all the bustle of getting the horses out of the sheds and bringing them round to the meeting-house steps. At noon the boys sometimes sat in the wagons and swung the whips without cracking them; now it was permitted to give them a little snap in order to bring the horses up in good style; and the boy was rather proud of the horse if it pranced a little while the timid "women-folks" were trying to get in. The boy had an eye for whatever life and stir there was in a New England Sunday. He liked to drive home fast. The old house

and the farm looked pleasant to him. There was an extra dinner when they reached home, and cheerful consciousness of duty performed made it a pleasant dinner. Long before sundown the Sunday-school book had been read, and the boy sat waiting in the house with great impatience the signal that the "day of rest" was over. A boy may not be very wicked, and yet not see the need of "rest." Neither his idea of rest nor work is that of older farmers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GRINDSTONE OF LIFE.

If there is one thing more than another that hardens the lot of the farmer-boy, it is the grindstone. Turning grindstones to grind scythes is one of those heroic but unobtrusive occupations for which one gets no credit. It is a hopeless kind of task, and, however faithfully the crank is turned, it is one that brings little reputation. There is a great deal of poetry about haying—I mean for those not engaged in it. One likes to hear the whetting of the scythes on a fresh morning and the response of the noisy bobolink, who always sits upon the fence and superintends the cutting of the dew-laden grass. There is a sort of music in the "swish" and a rhythm in the swing of the scythes in concert. The boy has not much time to attend to it, for it is lively business "spreading" after half a dozen men who have only to walk along and lay the grass low, while the boy has the whole hay-field on his hands. He has little time for the poetry of haying, as he struggles along, filling the air with the wet mass which he shakes over his head, and picking his way with short legs and bare feet among the short and freshly cut stubble. But if the scythes cut well and swing merrily it is due to the boy who turned the grindstone. O, it was nothing to do, just to turn the grindstone a few minutes for this and that one before breakfast; any "hired man" was authorized to order the boy to turn the grindstone. How they did bear on, those great strapping fellows! Turn, turn, turn, what a weary go it was. For my part, I used to like a grindstone that "wabbled" a good deal on its axis, for when I turned it fast, it put the grinder on a lively lookout for cutting his hands, and entirely satisfied his desire that I should "turn faster." It was some sport to make the water fly and wet the grinder, suddenly starting up quickly and surprising him when I was turning very slowly. I used to wish sometimes that I could turn fast enough to make the stone fly into a dozen pieces. Steady turning is what the

grinders like, and any boy who turns steadily, so as to give an even motion to the stone, will be much praised, and will be in demand. I advise any boy who desires to do this sort of work to turn steadily. If he does it by jerks and in a fitful manner, the "hired men" will be very apt to dispense with his services and turn the grindstone for each other.

This is one of the most disagreeable tasks of the boy farmer, and, hard as it is, I do not know why it is supposed to belong especially to childhood. But it is, and one of the certain marks that second childhood has come to a man on a farm is that he is asked to turn the grindstone as if he were a boy again. When the old man is good for nothing else, when he can neither mow nor pitch, and scarcely "rake after," he can turn grindstone, and it is in this way that he renews his youth. "Ain't you ashamed to have your granther turn the grindstone?" asked the hired man of the boy. So the boy takes hold and turns himself, till his little back aches. When he gets older he wishes he had replied, "Ain't you ashamed to make either an old man or a little boy do such hard grinding work?"

Doing the regular work of this world is not much, the boy thinks, but the wearisome part is the waiting on the people who do the work. And the boy is not far wrong. This is what women and boys have to do on a farm, wait upon everybody who "works."

The trouble with the boy's life is that he has no time that he can call his own. He is, like a barrel of beer, always on draught. The men-folks, having worked in the regular hours, lie down and rest, stretch themselves idly in the shade at noon, or lounge about after supper. Then the boy, who has done nothing all day but turn grindstone, and spread hay, and rake after and run his little legs off at everybody's beck and call, is sent on some errand or some household chore, in order that time shall not hang heavy on his hands. The boy comes nearer to perpetual motion than anything else in nature, only it is not altogether a voluntary motion. The time that the farm boy gets for his own is usually at the end of a stent. We used to be given a certain piece of corn to hoe, or a certain quantity of corn to husk in so many days. If we finished the task before the time set, we had the remainder to ourselves. In my day it used to take very sharp work to gain anything, but we were always anxious to take the chance. I think we enjoyed the holiday in anticipation quite as much as we did when we had won it. Unless it was training-day, or Fourth of July, or the circus was coming, it was a little difficult to find anything big enough

to fill our anticipations of the fun we would have in the day or the two or three days we had earned. We did not want to waste the time on any common thing. Even going fishing in one of the wild mountain brooks was hardly up to the mark, for we could sometimes do that on a rainy day. Going down to the village store was not very exciting, and was on the whole a waste of our precious time. Unless we could get out our military company, life was apt to be a little blank, even on the holidays for which we had worked so hard. If you went to see another boy, he was probably at work in the hay-field or the potato-patch, and his father looked at you askance. You sometimes took hold and helped him, so that he could go and play with you; but it was usually time to go for the cows before the task was done. The fact is, or used to be, that the amusements of a boy in the country are not many. Snaring "suckers" out of the deep meadow brook used to be about as good as any that I had. The North American sucker is not an engaging animal in all respects; his body is comely enough, but his mouth is puckered up like that of a purse. The mouth is not formed for the gentle angle-worm nor the delusive fly of the fishermen. It is necessary therefore to snare the fish, if you want him. In the sunny days he lies in the deep pools, by some big stone or near the bank, poising himself quite still, or only stirring his fins a little now and then, as an elephant moves his ears. He will lie so for hours, or rather float, in perfect idleness and apparent bliss. The boy who also has a holiday, but cannot keep still, comes along and peeps over the bank. "Golly, ain't he a big one!" Perhaps he is eighteen inches long, and weighs two or three pounds. He lies there among his friends, little fish and big ones, quite a school of them, perhaps a district school, that only keeps in warm days in the summer. The pupils seem to have little to learn, except to balance themselves and to turn gracefully with a flirt of the tail. Not much is taught but "deportment," and some of the old suckers are perfect Turveydrops in that. The boy is armed with a pole and a stout line, and on the end of it is a slipnoose, and slides together when anything is caught in it. The boy approaches the bank and looks over. There he lies, calm as a whale. The boy devours him with his eyes. He is almost too much excited to drop the snare into the water without making a noise. A puff of wind comes and ruffles the surface, so that he cannot see the fish. It is calm again, and there he still is, moving his fins in peaceful security. The boy lowers his snare behind

the fish and slips it along. He intends to get it around him just back of the gills and then elevate him with a sudden jerk. It is a delicate operation, for the snare will turn a little, and if it hits the fish he is off. However it goes well, the wire is almost in place, when suddenly the fish, as if he had a warning in a dream, for he appears to see nothing, moves his tail just a little, glides out of the loop, and with no seeming appearance of frustrating any one's plans, lounges over to the other side of the pool; and there he reposes just as if he was not spoiling the boy's holiday. This slight change of base on the part of the fish requires the boy to reorganize his whole campaign, get a new position on the bank, a new line of approach, and patiently wait for the wind and sun before he can lower his line. This time, cunning and patience are rewarded. The hoop encircles the unsuspecting fish. The boy's eyes almost start from his head as he gives a tremendous jerk, and feels by the dead-weight that he has got him fast. Out he comes, as he goes in the air, and the boy runs to look at him. In this transaction, however, no one can be more surprised than the sucker.

CHAPTER VII.

FICTION AND SENTIMENT.

The boy farmer does not appreciate school vacations as highly as his city cousin. When school keeps he has only to "do chores and go to school," but between terms there are a thousand things on the farm that have been left for the boy to do. Picking up stones in the pastures and piling them in heaps used to be one of them. Some lots appeared to grow stones, or else the sun every year drew them to the surface, as it coaxes the round cantelopes out of the soft garden soil; it is certain that there were fields that always gave the boys this sort of fall work. And very lively work it was on frosty mornings for the bare-footed boys, who were continually turning up the larger stones in order to stand for a moment in the warm place that had been covered from the frost. A boy can stand on one leg as well as a Holland stork; and the boy who found a warm spot for the sole of his foot was likely to stand in it until the words, "Come, stir your stumps," broke in discordantly upon his meditations. For the boy is very much given to meditations. If he had his way he would do nothing in a hurry; he likes to stop and think about things, and enjoy his work as he goes along. He picks up potatoes as if each one was a lump of gold just turned out of the dirt, and requiring careful examination.

Although the country boy feels a little joy when school breaks up (as he does when anything breaks up, or any change takes place), since he is released from the discipline and restraint of it, yet the school is his opening into the world,—his romance. Its opportunities for enjoyment are numberless. He does not exactly know what he is set at books for; he takes spelling rather as an exercise for his lungs, standing up and shouting out the words with entire recklessness of consequences; he grapples doggedly with arithmetic and geography as something that must be cleared out of his way before recess, but not at all with the zest he would dig a woodchuck out of his hole. But recess! Was ever an enjoyment so keen as that with which a boy rushes out of the school-house door for the ten minutes of recess? He is like to burst with animal spirits; he runs like a deer; he can nearly fly; and he throws himself into play with entire self-forgetfulness, and an energy that would overturn the world if his strength were proportioned to it. For ten minutes the world is absolutely his; the weights are taken off, restraints are loosed, and he is his own master for that brief time,—as he never again will be if he lives to be as old as the king of Thule, and nobody knows how old he was. And there is the nooning, a solid hour, in which vast projects can be carried out which have been slyly matured during the school-hours; expeditions are undertaken, wars are begun between the Indians on one side and the settlers on the other, the military company is drilled (without uniforms or arms), or games are carried on which involve miles of running, and an expenditure of wind sufficient to spell the spelling-book through at the highest pitch.

Friendships are formed, too, which are fervent if not enduring, and enmities contracted which are frequently "taken out" on the spot, after a rough fashion boys have of settling as they go along; cases of long credit, either in word or trade, are not frequent with boys; boot on jackknives must be paid on the nail; and it is considered much more honorable to out with a personal grievance at once, even if the explanation is made with the fists, than to pretend fair, and then take a sneaking revenge on some concealed opportunity. The country boy at the district school is introduced into a wider world than he knew at home, in many ways. Some big boy brings to school a copy of the Arabian Nights, a dog-eared copy, with cover, title-page, and the last leaves missing, which is passed around, and slyly read under the desk, and perhaps comes to the little boy whose parents disapprove of novel-reading,

and have no work of fiction in the house except a pious fraud called "Six Months in a Convent," and the latest comic almanac. The boy's eyes dilate as he steals some of the treasures out of the wondrous pages, and he longs to lose himself in the land of enchantment open before him. He tells at home that he has seen the most wonderful book that ever was, and a big boy has promised to lend it to him. "Is it a true book, John?" asks the grandmother, "because if it isn't true, it is the worst thing that a boy can read." (This happened years ago.) John cannot answer as to the truth of the book, and so does not bring it home; but he borrows it, nevertheless, and conceals it in the barn, and lying in the hay-mow is lost in its enchantment many an odd hour when he is supposed to be doing chores. There were no chores in the Arabian Nights; the boy there had but to rub the ring and summon a genius, who would feed the calves and pick up chips and bring in wood in a minute. It was through this emblazoned portal that the boy walked into the world of books, which he soon found was larger than his own, and filled with people he longed to know.

And the farmer-boy is not without his sentiment and his secrets, though he has never been at a children's party in his life, and, in fact, never has heard that children go into society when they are seven, and give regular wine-parties when they reach the ripe age of nine. But one of his regrets at having the summer school close is dimly connected with a little girl, whom he does not care much for,—would a great deal rather play with a boy than with her at recess,—but whom he will not see again for some time.—a sweet little thing, who is very friendly with John, and with whom he has been known to exchange bits of candy wrapped up in paper, and for whom he cut in two his lead-pencil, and gave her half. At the last day of school she goes part way with John, and then he turns and goes a longer distance towards her home, so that it is late when he reaches his own. Is he late? He didn't know he was late, he came straight home when school was dismissed only going a little way home with Alice Linton to help her carry her books. In a box in his chamber, which he has lately put a padlock on, among fish-hooks and lines and bait-boxes, odd pieces of brass, twine, early sweet apples, pop-corn, beech-nuts, and other articles of value, are some little billets-doux, fancifully folded, three-cornered or otherwise, and written, I will warrant, in red or beautiful blue ink. These little notes are parting gifts at the close of school, and John, no doubt, gave his own in exchange

for them, though the writing was an immense labor, and the folding was a secret bought of another boy for a big piece of sweet flag-root baked in sugar, a delicacy which John used to carry in his pantaloons-pocket until his pocket was in such a state that putting his fingers into them was about as good as dipping them into the sugar-bowl at home. Each precious note contained a lock or curl of girl's hair,—a rare collection of all colors, after John had been in school many terms, and had passed through a great many parting scenes,—black, brown, red, tow-color, and some that looked like spun gold and felt like silk. The sentiment contained in the notes was that which was common in the school and expressed a melancholy foreboding of early death, and a touching desire to have hair enough tied side the grave to constitute a sort of strand of remembrance. With little variation, the poetry that made the hair precious was in the words, and, as a Cockney would say, set to the hair, following:

"This lock of hair,
Which I did wear,
Was taken from my head
When they used
Remember me,
Long after I am dead."

John liked to read these verses, which always made a new and fresh impression with each lock of hair, and he was not critical; they were for him vehicles of true sentiment, and indeed they were what he used when he enclosed a clip of his own sunny hair to a friend. And it did not occur to him until he was a great deal older and less innocent to smile at them. John felt that he would sacredly keep every lock of hair intrusted to him, though death should come on the wings of cholera and take away every one of these sad, red-ink correspondents. When John's big brother one day caught sight of these treasures, and brutally told him that he had hair enough to stuff a horse-collar," John was so outraged and shocked, as he should have been, at this rude invasion of his heart, this coarse suggestion, this profanation of his most delicate feeling that he was only kept from crying by the resolution to "lick" his brother as soon as ever he got big enough.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMING OF THANKSGIVING.

One of the best things in farming is gathering the chestnuts, hickory-nuts, butter-nuts, and even beech-nuts, in the late fall, after the frosts have cracked the husks and the high winds have shaken

them, and the colored leaves have strewn the ground. On a bright October day, when the air is full of golden sunshine, there is nothing quite so exhilarating as going nutting. Nor is the pleasure of it altogether destroyed for the boy by the consideration that he is making himself useful in obtaining supplies for the winter household. The getting-in of potatoes and corn is a different thing; that is the prose, but nutting is the poetry, of farm life. I am not sure but the boy would find it very irksome, though, if he were obliged to work at nut-gathering in order to procure food for the family. He is willing to make himself useful in his own way. The Italian boy, who works day after day at a huge pile of pine-cones, pounding and cracking them and taking out the long seeds, which are sold and eaten as we eat nuts (and which are almost as good as pumpkin-seeds, another favorite with Italians), probably does not see the fun of nutting. Indeed, if the farmer-boy here were set at pounding off the walnut-shucks and opening the prickly chestnut burs, as a task, he would think himself an ill-used boy. What a hardship the prickles in his fingers would be! But now he does them out with his jack-knife and enjoys the process on the whole. The boy is willing to do any amount of work if it is called play.

In nutting, the squirrel is not more nimble and industrious than the boy. I like to see a crowd of boys swarm over a chestnut grove; they leave a desert behind them like the seventeen-years locusts. To climb a tree and shake it, to club it, to strip it of its fruit and pass to the next, is the sport of a brief time. I have seen a legion of boys scamper over our grass-plot under the chestnut-trees, each one as active as if he were a new patent picking-machine, sweeping the ground clean of nuts, and disappear over the hill before I could go to the door and speak to them about it. Indeed I have noticed that boys don't care much for conversation with the owners of fruit-trees. They could speedily make their fortunes if they would work as rapidly in cotton-fields. I have never seen anything like it except a flock of turkeys removing the grasshoppers from a piece of pasture.

Perhaps it is not generally known that we get the idea of some of our best military maneuvers from the turkey. The deploying of the skirmish-line in advance of an army is one of them. The drum-major of our holiday militia companies is copied exactly from the turkey gobbler; he has the same splendid appearance, the same proud step, and the same martial aspect. The gobbler does not lead his forces in the field,

but goes behind them, like the colonel of a regiment, so that he can see every part of the line and direct its movements. This resemblance is one of the most singular things in natural history. I like to watch the gobbler manœvering his forces in a grasshopper-field. He throws out his company of two dozen turkeys in a crescent-shaped skirmish-line, the number disposed at equal distances, while he walks majestically in the rear. They advance rapidly, picking right and left, with military precision, killing the foe and disposing of the dead bodies with the same peck. Nobody has yet discovered how many grasshoppers a turkey will hold; but he is very much like a boy at a Thanksgiving dinner,—he keeps on eating as long as the supplies last. The gobbler, in one of these raids, does not condescend to grab a single grasshopper, at least, not while anybody is watching him. But I suppose he makes up for it when his dignity cannot be injured by having spectators of his voracity; perhaps he falls upon the grasshoppers when they are driven into a corner of the field. But he is only fattening himself for destruction; like all greedy persons, he comes to a bad end. And if the turkeys had any Sunday school, they would be taught this.

The New England boy used to look forward to Thanksgiving as the great event of the year. He was apt to get stents set him,—so much corn to husk, for instance, before that day, so that he could have an extra play-spell; and in order to gain a day or two, he would work at his task with the rapidity of half a dozen boys. He had the day after Thanksgiving always as a holiday, and this was the day he counted on. Thanksgiving itself was rather an awful festival,—very much like Sunday, except for the enormous dinner, which filled his imagination for months before as completely as it did his stomach for that day and a week after. There was an impression in the house that that dinner was the most important event since the landing from the Mayflower. Helioagabalus, who did not resemble a Pilgrim Father at all, but who had prepared for himself in his day some very sumptuous banquets in Rome, and ate a great deal of the best he could get (and like peacocks stuffed with asafetida, for one thing), never had anything like a Thanksgiving dinner; for do you suppose that he, or Sardanapalus either, ever had twenty-four different kinds of pie at one dinner? Therein many a New England boy is greater than the Roman emperor of the Assyrian king, and these were among the most luxurious eaters of their day and generation. But something more is necessary to make good men than plenty to eat, as Helioagabalus no doubt found when his

head was cut off. Cutting off the head was a mode the people had of expressing disapproval of their conspicuous men. Nowadays they elect them to a higher office, or give them a mission to some foreign country, if they do not do well where they are.

For days and days before Thanksgiving the boy was kept at work evenings, pounding and paring and cutting up and mixing (not being allowed to taste much), until the world seemed to him to be made of fragrant spices, green fruit, raisins, and pastry—a world that he was only yet allowed to enjoy through his nose. How filled the house was with the most delicious smells! The mince-pies that were made! If John had been shut in solid walls with them piled about him, he couldn't have eaten his way out in four weeks. There were dainties enough cooked in those two weeks to have made the entire year luscious with good living, if they had been scattered along in it. But people were probably all the better for scrimping themselves a little in order to make this a great feast. And it was not by any means over in a day. There were weeks deep of chicken-pie and other pastry. The cold buttery was a cave of Aladdin, and it took a long time to excavate all its riches.

Thanksgiving Day itself was a heavy day, the hilarity of it being so subdued by going to meeting, and the universal wearing of the Sunday clothes, that the boy couldn't see it. But if he felt little exhilaration, he ate a great deal. The next day was the real holiday. Then were the merry-making parties, and perhaps the skatings and sleighrides, for the freezing weather came before the governor's proclamation in many parts of New England. The night after Thanksgiving occurred, perhaps, the first real party that the boy had ever attended, with live girls in it, dressed so bewitchingly. And there he heard those philandering songs, and played those sweet games of forfeits, which put him quite beside himself, and kept him awake that night till the rooster crowed at the end of his first chicken-nap. What a new world did that party open to him! I think it likely that he saw there, and probably did not dare say ten words to, some tall, graceful girl, much older than himself, who seemed to him like a new order of being. He could see her face just as plainly in the darkness of his chamber. He wondered if she noticed how awkward he was, and how short his trousers-legs were. He blushed as he thought of his rather ill-fitting shoes; and determined, then and there, that he wouldn't be put off with a ribbon any longer, but would have a young man's necktie. It was somewhat painful thinking the party

over, but it was delicious too. He did not think, probably, that he would die for that tall, handsome girl; he did not put it exactly in that way. But he rather resolved to live for her,—which might in the end amount to the same thing. At least he thought that nobody would live to speak twice disrespectfully of her in his presence.

CHAPTER IX

THE SEASON OF PUMPKIN-PIE.

What John said was that he didn't care much for pumpkin-pie; but that was after he had eaten a whole one. It seemed to him then that mince would be better.

The feeling of a boy towards pumpkin-pie has never been properly considered. There is an air of festivity about its approach in the fall. The boy is willing to help pare and cut up the pumpkin, and he watches with the greatest interest the stirring-up process and the pouring into the scalloped crust. When the sweet savor of the baking reaches his nostrils, he is filled with the most delightful anticipations. Why should he not be? He knows that for months to come the buttery will contain golden treasures, and that it will require only a slight ingenuity to get at them.

The fact is, that the boy is as good in the buttery as in any part of farming. His elders say that the boy is always hungry, but that is a very coarse way to put it. He has only recently come into a world that is full of good things to eat, and there is on the whole a very short time in which to eat them; at least he is told, a long the first information he receives, that life is short. Life being brief, and pie and the like fleeting, he very soon decides upon an active campaign. It may be an old story to people who have been eating for forty or fifty years, but it is different with a beginner. He takes the thick and thin as it comes, as to pie, for instance. Some people do make them very thin. I knew a place where they were not thicker than the poor man's plaster; they were spread so thin upon the crust that they were better fitted to draw out hunger than to satisfy it. They used to be made up by the great oven-full and kept in the dry cellar, where they hardened and dried to a toughness you would hardly believe. This was a long time ago, and they make the pumpkin-pie in the country better now, or the race of boys would have been so discouraged that I think they would have stopped coming into the world.

The truth is that boys have always been so plenty that they are not half appreciated. We have shown that a farm could not get

along without them, and yet their rights are seldom recognized. One of the most amusing things is their effort to acquire personal property. The boy has the care of the calves; they always need feeding or shutting up or letting out; when the boy wants to play there are those calves to be looked after,—until he gets to hate the name of calf. But in consideration of his faithfulness, two of them are given to him. There is no doubt that they are his, he has the entire charge of them. When they get to be steers, he spends all his holidays in breaking them in to a yoke. He gets them so broken in that they will run like a pair of deer all over the farm, turning the yoke, and kicking their heels, while he follows in full chase, shouting the ox language till he is red in the face. When the steers grow up to be cattle, a drover one day comes along and takes them away, and the boy is told that he can have another pair of calves; and so, with undiminished faith he goes back and begins over again to make his fortune. He owns lambs and young colts in the same way and makes just as much out of them.

There are ways in which the farmer-boy can earn money, as by gathering the early chestnuts and taking them to the Corner store, or by finding turkey's eggs and selling them to his mother; and another way is to go without butter at the table—but the money thus made is for the heathen. John told in Dr. Livingstone that some of the tribes in Central Africa (which is represented by a blank spot in the atlas), use the butter to grease their hair, putting on pounds of it at a time; and he said he had rather eat his butter than have it put to that use, especially as it melted away so fast in that hot climate.

Of course it was explained to John that the missionaries do not actually carry butter to Africa, and that they must usually go without it themselves there, it being almost impossible to make it good from the milk in the cocoanuts. And it was further explained to him that even if the heathen never received his butter or the money for it, it was an excellent thing for a boy to cultivate the habit of self-denial and of benevolence, and if the heathen never heard of him, he would be blessed for his generosity. This was all true.

But John said that he was tired of supporting the heathen out of the butter, and he wished the rest of the family would also stop eating butter and save the money for missions; and he wanted to know where the other members of the family got their money to send to the heathen; and his mother said that he was about half right, and that self-denial was just as good for grown people as it was for little boys and girls.

The boy is not always slow to take what he considers his rights. Speaking of those thin pumpkin-pies kept in the cellar cupboard. I used to know a boy, who afterwards grew to be a selectman, and brushed his hair straight up like General Jackson, and went to the legislature, where he always voted against every measure that was proposed, in the most honest manner, and got the reputation of being the "watch-dog of the treasury." Kats in the cellar were nothing to be compared to this boy for destructiveness in pies. He used to go down whenever he could make an excuse, to get apples for the family, or draw a mug of cider for his dear old grandfather (who was a famous story-teller about the Revolutionary War, and would, no doubt, have been wounded in battle if he had not been as prudent as he was patriotic), and come upstairs with a tallow candle in one hand and the apples or cider in the other, looking as innocent and as unconscious as if he had never done anything in his life except deny himself butter for the sake of the heathen. And yet this boy would have buttoned under his jacket an entire round pumpkin-pie. And the pie was so well made and so dry that it was not injured in the least, and it never hurt the boy's clothes a bit more than if it had been inside of him instead of outside, and this boy would retire to a secluded place and eat it with another boy, being never suspected because he was not in the cellar long enough to eat a pie, and he never appeared to have one at home. But he did something worse than this. When his mother saw that pie after pie departed, she told the family that she suspected the hired man; and the boy never said a word, which was the meanest kind of lying. That hired man was probably regarded with suspicion by the family to the end of his days, and if he had been accused of robbing, they would have believed him guilty.

I shouldn't wonder if that selectman occasionally has remorse now about that pie-dreams, perhaps, that it is buttoned up under his jacket and sticking to him like a breastplate; that it lies upon his stomach like a round and red-hot nightmare, eating into his vitals. Perhaps not. It is difficult to say exactly what was the sin of stealing that kind of pie, especially if the one who stole it ate it. It could have been used for the game of pitching quoits, and a pair of them would have made very fair wheels for the dog-cart. And yet it is probably as wrong to steal a thin pie as a thick one; and it made no difference because it was easy to steal this sort. Easy stealing is no better than easy lying, where detection of the lie is difficult. The boy who steals his mother's

pies has no right to be surprised when some other boy steals his water-melons. Stealing is like charity in one respect,—it is apt to begin at home.

CHAPTER X.

FIRST EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD.

If I were forced to be a boy, and a boy in the country,—the best kind of boy to be in the summer, I would be about ten years of age. As soon as I got any older, I would quit it. The trouble with a boy is that just as he begins to enjoy himself he is too old, and has to be set to doing something else. If a country boy were wise he would stay at just that age when he could enjoy himself most, and have the least expected of him in the way of work.

Of course the perfectly good boy will always prefer to work and to do "chores" for his father and errands for his mother and sisters, rather than enjoy himself in his own way. I never saw but one such boy. He lived in the town of Goshen—not the place where the butter is made, but a much better Goshen than that. And I never saw him, but I heard of him, and being about the same age, as I supposed, I was taken once from Zoah, where I lived, to Goshen to see him. But he was dead. He had been dead almost a year, so that it was impossible to see him. He died of the most singular disease: it was from *not* eating green apples in the season of them. This boy, whose name was Solomon, before he died, would rather split up kindling-wood for his mother than go a-fishing,—the consequence was that he was kept at splitting kindling-wood and such work most of the time, and grew a better and more useful boy day by day. Solomon would not disobey his parents and eat green apples,—not even when they were ripe enough to knock off with a stick,—but he had such a longing for them, that he pined, and passed away. If he had eaten the green apples he would have died of them probably; so that his example is a difficult one to follow. In fact, a boy is a hard subject to get a moral from. All his little companions who ate green apples came to Solomon's funeral, and were very sorry for what they had done.

John was a very different boy from Solomon, not half so good, nor half so delicate. He was a farmer's boy, as Solomon was, but he did not take so much interest in the farm. If John could have had his way he would have discovered a cave full of diamonds, and lots of nail-kegs full of gold-pieces and Spanish dollars, with a pretty little girl living in the cave, and two beautifully capari-

sored horses, upon which, taking the jewels and money, they would have ridden off together, he did not know where. John had got thus far in his studies, which were apparently arithmetic and geography, but were in reality the Arabian Nights, and other books of high and mighty adventure. He was a simple country boy, and did not know much about the world as it is, but he had one of his own imagination, in which he lived a good deal. I dare say he found out soon enough what the world is, and he had a lesson or two when he was quite young, in two incidents, which I may as well relate.

If you had seen John at this time you might have thought he was only a shabbily dressed country lad, and you never would have guessed what beautiful thoughts he sometimes had as he went stubbing his toes along the dusty road, nor what a chivalrous little fellow he was. You would have seen a short boy, barefooted, with trousers at once too big and too short, held up perhaps by one suspender only, a checked cotton shirt, and a hat braided palm-leaf, frayed at the edges and bulged up in the crown. It is impossible to keep a hat neat if you use it to catch bumble-bees and whisk 'em; to bail the water from a leaky boat; to catch minnows in; to put over honey-bees' nests, and to transport pebbles, strawberries, and hens' eggs. John usually carried a sling in his hand, or a bow, or a limber stick, sharp at one end, from which he could sling apples a great distance. If he walked in the road, he walked in the middle of it, shuffling up the dust; or if he went elsewhere, he was likely to be running on the top of the fence or the stone wall, and chasing chipmunks.

John knew the best place to dig sweet-flag in all the farm: it was in a meadow by the river, where the bobolink sang, he never liked to hear the bobolink sing, however, for he said it always reminded him of the whetting of a scythe, and that reminded him of getting hay; and if there was anything he hated it was spreading hay after the mowers.

"I guess you wouldn't like it yourself," said John, "with the stubs getting into your feet, and the hot sun, and the men getting at you, and you all have to do."

That evening, once, John was coming along the road home with some stalks of the sweet flag in his hand; there is a succulent pith in the end of the stalk which is very good to eat tender, and not so strong as the root; and John liked to pull it, and carry home what he did not eat on the way. As he was walking along he met a carriage, which stopped opposite to him; he also stopped and bowed, as country boys used to bow in John's day. A lady leaned from the carriage, and said,—

"What have you got, little boy?"

She seemed to be the most beautiful woman John had ever seen; with light hair, dark, tender eyes, and the sweetest smile. There was that in her gracious mien and in her dress which reminded John of the beautiful castle ladies, with whom he was well acquainted in books. He felt that he knew her at once, and he also seemed to be a sort of young prince himself. I fancy he didn't look much like one. But of his own appearance he thought not at all, as he replied to the lady's question, without the least embarrassment.

"It's sweet-flag stalk; would you like some?"

"Indeed, I should like to taste it," said the lady, with a most winning smile. "I used to be very fond of it when I was a little girl."

John was delighted that the lady should like sweet-flag, and that she was pleased to accept it from him. He thought himself that it was about the best thing to eat he knew. He handed up a large bunch of it. The lady took two or three stalks, and was about to return the rest, when John said, —

"Please keep it all, ma'am. I can get lots more. I know where it's ever so thick."

"Thank you, thank you," said the lady, and as the carriage started she reached out her hand to John. He did not understand the motion, until he saw a cent drop in the road at his feet. Instantly all his illusion and his pleasure vanished. Something like tears were in his eyes as he shouted, —

"I don't want your cent. I don't sell flag!"

John was intensely mortified. "I suppose," he said, "she thought I was a sort of beggar-boy. To think of selling flag!"

At any rate, he walked away and left the cent in the road, a humiliated boy. The next day he told Jim Gates about it. Jim said he was green not to take the money; he'd go and look for it now, if he would tell him about where it dropped. And Jim did spend an hour poking about in the dirt, but he did not find the cent. Jim, however, had had an idea; he said he was going to dig sweet flag, and see if another carriage wouldn't come along.

John's next rebuff and knowledge of the world was of another sort. He was again walking the road at twilight, when he was overtaken by a wagon with one seat, upon which were two pretty girls, and a young gentleman sat between them, driving. It was a merry party, and John could hear them laughing and singing as they approached him. The wagon stopped when it overtook him, and one of the sweet-faced girls leaned from the seat and said, quite seriously and pleasantly, —

"Little boy, how's your mar?"

John was surprised and puzzled for a moment. He had never seen the young lady, but he thought that she perhaps knew his mother; at any rate his instinct of politeness made him say —

"She's pretty well. I thank you."

"Does she know you are out?"

And thereupon all three in the wagon burst into a roar of laughter, and dashed on.

It flashed upon John in a moment that he had been imposed on, and it hurt him dreadfully. His self-respect was injured somehow and he felt as if his lovely, gentle mother had been insulted. He would like to have thrown a stone at the wagon, and in a rage he cried, —

"You're a nice——" but he couldn't think of any hard, bitter words quick enough.

Probably the young lady, who might have been almost any young lady, never knew what a cruel thing she had done.

CHAPTER XI.

HOMI INVENTIONS.

The winter season is not all sliding down hill for the farmer-boy, by any means; yet he contrives to get as much fun out of it as from any part of the year. There is a difference in boys, some are always jolly and some go scowling always through life as if they had a stone bruise on each heel. I like a jolly boy.

I used to know one who came round every morning to sell molasses candy, offering two sticks for a cent a-piece; it was worth fifty cents a day to see his cheery face. That boy rose in the world. He is now the owner of a large town at the west. To be sure, there are no houses in it except his own; but there is a map of it and roads and streets are laid out on it, with dwellings and churches and academies and a college and an opera-house, and you could scarcely tell it from Springfield or Hartford, on paper. He and all his family have the fever and ague, and shake worse than the people at Lebanon, but they do not mind it, it makes them lively, in fact. Eld. May is just as jolly as he used to be. He calls his town Mayopolis, and expects to be mayor of it; his wife, however, calls the town Maybe.

The farmer-boy likes to have winter come for one thing, because it freezes up the ground so that he can't dig in it; and it is covered with snow so that there is no picking up stones, nor driving the cows to pasture. He would have a very easy time if it were not for the getting up before daylight to build the fires and do the "chores." Nature intended the long winter nights for the

farmer-boy to sleep; but in my day he was expected to open his sleepy eyes when the cock crew, get out of the warm bed and light a candle, struggling into his cold pantaloons, and pull on boots in which the thermometer would have gone down to zero, rake open the coals on the hearth and start the morning fire, and then go to the barn to "fodder." The frost was thick on the kitchen windows, the snow was drifted against the door, and the journey to the barn, in the pale light of dawn, over the creaking snow, was like an exile's trip to Siberia. The boy was not half awake when he stumbled into the cold barn and was greeted by the lowing and bleating and neighing of cattle waiting for their breakfast. How their breath steamed up from the mangers, and hung in frosty spears from their noses. Through the great lofts above the hay, where the swallows nested the winter wind whistled, and the snow sifted. Those old barns were well ventilated.

I used to spend much valuable time in planning a barn, that should be tight and warm, with a fire in it if necessary in order to keep the temperature somewhere near the freezing point. I couldn't see how the cattle could live in a place where a lively boy, full of young blood, would freeze to death in a short time if he did not swing his arms and slap his hands, and jump about like a goat. I thought I would have a sort of perpetual manger that should shake down the hay when it was wanted, and a self-acting machine that should cut up the turnips and pass them into the mangers, and water always flowing for the cattle and horses to drink. With these simple arrangements I could lie in bed, and know that "chores" were doing themselves. It would also be necessary, in order that I should not be disturbed, that the crow should be taken out of the roosters, but I could think of no process to do it. It seems to me that the hen-breeders, if they know as much as they say they do, might raise a breed of crowless roosters, for the benefit of boys, quiet neighborhoods, and sleepy families.

There was another notion that I had about kindling the kitchen fire, that I never carried out. It was to have a spring at the head of my bed, connecting with a wire, which should run to a torpedo which I would plant over night in the ashes of the fireplace. By touching the spring I could explode the torpedo, which would scatter the ashes and cover the live coals, and at the same time shake the sticks of wood which were standing by the side of the ashes in the chimney, and the fire would kindle itself. This ingenious plan was frowned on by the whole family, who said they did not want to be waked up every morning by an explosion. And yet they ex-

pected me to wake up without an explosion. A boy's plans for making life agreeable are hardly ever heeded.

I never knew a boy farmer who was not eager to go to the district school in winter. There is such a chance of learning, that he must be a dull boy who does not come out in the spring a fair skater, an accurate snow-baller, and an accomplished slider-down-hill, with or without board, on his seat, on his stomach, or on his feet. Take a moderate hill, with a foot-slide down it worn to icy smoothness, and a "go-round" of boys on it, and there is nothing like it for whittling away boot-leather. The boy is the shoemaker's friend. An active lad can wear down a pair of cowhide soles in a week so coasting is also slow fun compared to the "bareback" sliding down a steep hill over a hard, glistening crust. It is not only dangerous, but it is destructive to jacket and pantaloons to a degree to make a tailor laugh. If any other animal wore out his skin as fast as a school-boy wears out his that the ice will scrape his toes. Sledding or clothes in winter, it would need a new one once a month. In a country-district school patches were not by any means a sign of poverty, but of the boy's courage and adventurous disposition. Our elders used to threaten to dress us in leather and put sheet-iron seats in our trousers. The boy said that he wore out his trousers on the hard seats in the school-house, ciphering hard sums. For that extraordinary statement he received two castigations, one at home, that was mild, and one from the schoolmaster, who was careful to lay the rod on the boy's sliding-place, punishing him as he jocosely called it on a sliding scale, according to the thinness of his pantaloons.

What I liked best at school, however was the study of history, early history, the Indian wars. We studied it mostly at noontime, and we had it illustrated as the children nowadays have "object-lessons,"—though our object was not so much to have lessons as it was to revive real history.

Back of the school-house rose a round hill, upon which tradition said had stood in colonial times a brick-house built by the settlers for defence against the Indians. For the Indians had the idea that the whites were not settled enough, and used to come nights to settle them with a tomahawk. It was called Fort Hill. It was very steep on each side, and the river ran close by. It was a charming place in summer, where one could find laurel, and checkerberries, and sassafras roots, and sit in the cool breeze looking at the mountains across the river, and listening to the murmur of the Deer-field. The Methodists built a meeting-

house there afterwards, but the hill was so slippery in winter that the aged could not climb it, and the wind raged so fiercely that it blew nearly all the young Methodists away (many of whom were afterwards heard of in the West), and finally the meeting-house itself came down into the valley, and grew a steeple, and enjoyed itself ever afterwards. It used to be a notion in New England that a meeting-house ought to stand as near heaven as possible.

The boys at our school divided themselves into two parties; one was the Early Settlers and the other the Pequots, the latter the most numerous. The early Settlers built a snow fort on the hill, and a strong fortress it was, constructed of snowballs, rolled up to a vast size (larger than the Cyclopien blocks of stone which from the ancient Etruscan walls in Italy), piled one upon another, and the whole cemented by pouring on water which froze and made the walls solid. The Pequots helped the whites build it. It had a covered way under the snow, through which only could it be entered, and it had bastions and towers and openings to fire from, and a great many other things for which there are no names in military books. And it had a glasis and a ditch outside.

When it was completed the Early Settlers, leaving the women in the school-house, a prey to the Indians, used to retire into it, and await the attack of the Pequots. There was only a handful of the garrison, while the Indians, were many, and also barbarous. It was agreed that they should be barbarous. And it was in this light that the great question was settled whether a boy might snow-ball with balls that he had soaked over night in water and let freeze. They were as hard as cobblestones, and if a boy should be hit in the head by one of them he could not tell whether he was a Pequot or an Early Settler. It was considered as unfair to use these ice-balls in an open fight, as it is to use poisoned ammunition in real war. But as the whites were protected by the fort, and the Indians were treacherous by nature, it was decided that the latter should use the hard missile.

The Pequots used to come swarming up the hill, with hideous warwhoops, attacking the fort on all sides with great noise and a shower of balls. The garrison replied with vells of defiance and well-directed shots, hurling back the invaders when they attempted to scale the walls. The Settlers had the advantage of position, but they were sometimes overpowered by numbers, and would often have had to surrender but for the ringing of the school-bell. The Pequots were in great fear of the school-bell.

I do not remember that the whites ever

hauled down their flag and surrendered voluntarily; but once or twice the fort was carried by storm and the garrison were massacred to a boy, and thrown out of the fortress, having been first scalped. To take a boy's cap was to scalp him, and after that he was dead, if he played fair. There were a great many hard hits given and taken, but always cheerfully, for it was in the cause of the early history. The history of Greece and Rome was stuff compared to this. And we had many boys in our school who could imitate the Indian warwhoop enough better than they could scan *arma virumque cano*.

CHAPTER XII

THE LONELY FARM-HOUSE.

The winter evenings of the farmer-boy in New England used not to be so gay as to tire him of the pleasures of life before he became of age. A remote farm-house, standing a little off the road, banked up with sawdust and earth to keep the frost out of the cellar, blockaded with snow, and flying a blue flag of smoke from its chimney, looks like a besieged fort. On cold and stormy winter nights, to the traveller wearily dragging along in his creaking sleigh, the light from its window suggests a house of refuge and the cheer of a blazing fire. But it is no less a fort, into which the family retire when the New England winter on the hills really sets in.

The boy is an important part of the garrison. He is not only one of the best means of communicating with the outer world, but he furnishes half the entertainment and takes two-thirds of the scolding of the family circle. A farm would come to grief without a boy on it, but it is impossible to think of a farm-house without a boy in it.

"That boy" brings life into the house; his tracks are to be seen everywhere, he leaves all the doors open, he hasn't half filled the wood-box, he makes noise enough to wake the dead; or he is in a brown study by the fire, and cannot be stirred, or he has fastened a grip into some Crusoe book which cannot easily be shaken off. I suppose that the farmer-boy's evenings are not now what they used to be; that he has more books, and less to do, and is not half so good a boy as formerly, when he used to think the almanac was pretty lively reading, and the comic almanac, if he could get hold of that, was a supreme delight.

Of course he had the evenings to himself after he had done the "chores" at the barn, brought in the wood and piled it high in the box, ready to be heaped upon the great open fire. It was nearly dark when he

came from school (with its continuation of snowballing and sliding), and he always had an agreeable time stumbling and fumbling around in barn and wood-house, in the wan- ing light.

John used to say that he supposed nobody would do his "chores" if he did not get home till midnight; and he was never con- tradicted. Whatever happened to him, and whatever length of days or sort of weather was produced by the almanac, the cardinal rule was that he should be at home before dark.

John used to imagine what people did in the dark ages, and wonder sometimes whether he wasn't still in them.

Of course, John had nothing to do all the evening, after his "chores,"—except little things. While he drew his chair up to the table in order to get the full radiance of the tallow candle on his slate or his book, the women of the house also sat by the table knitting and sewing. The head of the house sat in his chair, tipped back against the chimney; the hired man was in danger of burning his boots in the fire. John might be deep in the excitement of a bear study or be hard at writing a "composition" on his greasy slate; but whatever he was doing, he was the only one who could always be interrupted. It was he who must snuff the candles, and put on a stick of wood, and toast the cheese, and turn the apples, and crack the nuts. He knew where the fox- and-geese board was, and he could find the twelve-men-Morris. Considering that he was expected to go to bed at eight o'clock, one would say that the opportunity for study was not great, and that his reading was rather interrupted. There seemed to be always something for him to do, even when all the rest of the family came as near being idle as is ever possible in a New England household.

No wonder that John was not sleepy at eight o'clock; he had been flying about while the others had been yawning before the fire. He would like to sit up just to see how much more solemn and stupid it would become as the night went on; he wanted to tinker his skates, to mend his sled, to finish that chapter. Why should he go away from that bright blaze, and the company that sat in its radiance, to the cold and solitude of his chamber? Why didn't the people who were sleepy go to bed?

How lonesome the old house was; how cold it was, away from that great central fire in the heart of it; how its timbers creaked as if in the contracting pinch of the frost; what a rattling there was of windows; what a concerted attack upon the clap- boards; how the floors squeaked, and what

guests from round corners came to snatch the feeble flame of the candle from the boy's hand. How he shivered, as he paused at the staircase window to look out upon the great fields of snow, upon the stripped forest, through which he could hear the wind raving in a kind of fury, and up at the black flying clouds, amid which the young moon was dashing and driven on like a frail shallop at sea. And his teeth chattered more than ever when he got into the icy sheets, and drew himself up into a ball in his flannel nightgown, like a fox in his hole.

For a little time he could hear the noises down stairs, and an occasional laugh; he could guess that now they were having cider, and now apples were going round; and he could feel the wind tugging at the house, even sometimes shaking the bed. But this did not last long. He soon went away into a country he always delighted to be in: a calm place where the wind never blew, and no one dictated the time of going to bed to any one else. I like to think of him sleeping there, in such rude surround- ings, ingenuous, innocent, mischievous, with no thought of the butting he is to get from a world that has a good many worse places for a boy than the hearth of an old farm- house, and the sweet, though undemon- strative, affection of its family life.

But there were other evenings in the boy's life, that were different from these at home, and one of them he will never forget. It opened a new world to John, and set him into a great flutter. It produced a revolu- tion in his mind in regard to neckties; it made him wonder if greased boots were quite the thing compared with blacked boots; and he wished he had a long look- ing-glass, so that he could see, as he walked away from it, what was the effect of round patches on the portion of his trousers he could not see except in a mirror; and if patches were more stylish even on every- body's trousers. And he began to be very anxious to see the effect of the parting of his hair, and how it would look on each side, as he turned his head.

The evening to which I refer was that of John's first outing. He knew the girls at school, and he was interested in some of them with a different interest from that he took in the boys. He never wanted to take a ride out with one of them, for an insult was too plain to him; and he instinctively felt that a boy's natural rudeness when he was with them. He would help a timid little girl to stand erect and slide; he would draw her on his sled, till his hands were stiff with cold, without a murmur; he would generously give her red apples into which he longed to set his own sharp teeth; and he

would cut in two his led-pencil for a girl, when he would not for a boy. Had he not some of the beautiful auburn tresses of Cynthia Rudd in his skate, spruce-gum, and winter-green box at home? And yet the grand sentiment of life was little awakened in John. He liked best to be with boys, and their rough play suited him better than the amusements of the shrinking, fluttering, timid, and sensitive little girls. John had not learned then that a spider-web is stronger than a cable; or that a pretty little girl could turn him round her finger a great deal easier than a big bully of a boy could make him cry "enough."

John had indeed been at spelling-schools, and had accomplished the feat of "going home with a girl" afterwards; and he had been growing into the habit of looking around in meeting on Sunday, and noticing how Cynthia was dressed, and not enjoying the service quite as much if Cynthia was absent as when she was present. But there was very little sentiment in all this, and nothing whatever to make John blush at hearing her name.

But now John was invited to a regular party. There was the invitation, in a three-cornered billet, sealed with a transparent wafer: "Miss C. Rudd requests the pleasure of the company of," etc., all in blue ink, and the finest kind of pin-scratching writing. What a precious document it was to John! It even exhaled a faint sort of perfume, whether of lavender or caraway-seed he could not tell. He read it over a hundred times, and showed it confidentially to his favorite cousin, who had beaux of her own and had even "sat up" with them in the parlor. And from this sympathetic cousin John got advice as to what he should wear and how he should conduct himself at the party.

CHAPTER XIII

JOHN'S FIRST PARTY.

It turned out that John did not go after all to Cynthia Rudd's party, having broken through the ice on the river when he was skating that day, and, as the boy who pulled him out said, "come within an inch of his life." But he took care not to tumble into anything that should keep him from the next party, which was given with due formality by Melinda Mayhew.

John had been many a time to the house of Deacon Mayhew, and never with any hesitation, even if he knew that both the deacon's daughters—Melinda and Sophronia—were at home. The only fear he had felt was of the deacon's big dog, who always surlyly watched him as he came up the tan-

bark walk, and made a rush at him if he showed the least sign of wavering. But upon the night of the party his courage vanished, and he thought he would rather face all the dogs in town than knock at the front door.

The parlor was lighted up, and as John stood on the broad flagging before the front door, by the licac-bush, he could hear the sound of voices—girls' voices—which set his heart in a flutter. He could face the whole district school of girls without flinching,—he didn't mind 'em in the meeting-house in their Sunday best; but he began to be conscious that now he was passing to a new sphere, where the girls are supreme and superior, and he began to feel for the first time that he was an awkward boy. The girl takes to society as naturally as a duckling does to the placid pond, but with a semblance of sly timidity; the boy plunges in with a great splash, and hides his shy awkwardness in noise and commotion.

When John entered the company had nearly all come. He knew them every one, and yet there was something about them strange and unfamiliar. They were all a little afraid of each other, as people are apt to be when they are well dressed and met together for social purposes in the country. To be at a real party was a novel thing for most of them, and put a constraint upon them which they could not at once overcome. Perhaps it was because they were in the awful parlor, that carpeted room of haircloth furniture, which was so seldom opened. Upon the wall hung two certificates framed in black,—one certifying that, by the payment of fifty dollars, Deacon Mayhew was a life member of the American Tract Society, and the other that, by a like outlay of bread cast upon the waters, his wife was a life member of the A. B. C. F. M., a portion of the alphabet which has an awful significance to all New England childhood. These certificates are a sort of receipt in full for charity, and are a constant and consoling reminder to the farmer that he has discharged his religious duties.

There was a fire on the broad hearth, and that, with the tallow candles on the mantelpiece, made quite an illumination in the room, and enabled the boys, who were mostly on one side of the room, to see the girls, who were on the other, quite plainly. How sweet and demure the girls looked, to be sure! Every boy was thinking if his hair was slick, and feeling the full embarrassment of his entrance into fashionable life. It was queer that these children, who were so free everywhere else, should be so constrained now, and not know what to do with themselves. The shooting of a spark

out upon the carpet was a great relief, and was accompanied by a great deal of scrambling to throw it back into the fire, and caused much giggling. It was only gradually that the formality was at all broken, and the young people got together and found their tongues.

John at length found himself with Cynthia Kudd, to his great delight and considerable embarrassment, for Cynthia, who was older than John, never looked so pretty. To his surprise he had nothing to say to her. They had always found plenty to talk about before, but now nothing that he could think of seemed worth saying at a party.

"It is a pleasant evening," said John.

"It is quite so," replied Cynthia.

"Did you come in a cutter?" asked John anxiously.

"No; I walked on the crust, and it was perfectly lovely walking," said Cynthia, with a burst of confidence.

"Was it slippery?" continued John.

"Not very."

John hoped it would be slippery—very—when he walked home with Cynthia, as he determined to do, but he did not dare to say so, and the conversation ran around again. John thought about his dog and his sled and his yoke of steers, but he didn't see any way to bring them into conversation. Had she read the "Swiss Family Robinson?" Only a little ways, John said it was splendid, and he would lend it to her, for which she thanked him, and said, with such a sweet expression, she should be so glad to have it from him. That was encouraging.

And then John asked Cynthia if she had seen Sally Hawkes since the husking at their house, when Sally found so many red ears, and didn't she think she was a real pretty girl.

"Yes, she was right pretty," said Cynthia, guessed that Sally knew it pretty well. But did John like the color of her eyes?

No; John didn't like the color of her eyes exactly.

"Her mouth would be well enough if she didn't laugh so much and show her teeth."

John said her mouth was her worst feature.

"O no," said Cynthia, warmly; "her mouth is better than her nose."

John didn't know but it was better than her nose, and he should like her looks better if her hair wasn't so dreadful black.

But Cynthia, who could afford to be generous now, said she liked black hair, and she wished hers was dark. Whereupon John protested that he liked light hair—auburn hair—of all things.

And Cynthia said that Sally was a dear, good girl, and she didn't believe one word

of the story that she only really found one clear on at the husking that night, and that she had kept pulling it out as if it were a new one.

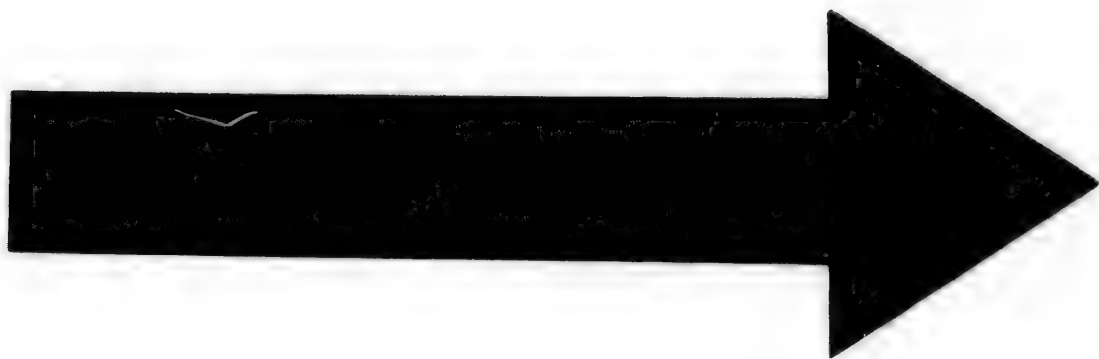
And so the conversation, once started, went on as briskly as possible about the paring-bee and the spelling-school, and the new singing-master who was coming and how Jack Thompson had gone to Northampton to be a clerk in a store, and how Elvira Redington, in the geography class at school, was asked what was the capital of Massachusetts, and had answered "Northampton," and all the school laughed. John enjoyed the conversation amazingly, and he half wished that he and Cynthia were the whole party.

But the party in the meantime got into operation, and the formality was broken up when the boys and girls had ventured out into the parlor into the more comfortable room, with its easy-chairs and everyday things, and even gone so far as to penetrate the kitchen in their frolic. As soon as they forgot they were a party they began to enjoy themselves.

But the real pleasure only began with the games. The party was nothing without the games, and indeed it was made for the games. Very likely it was one of the timid girls who proposed to play something, and when the ice was once broken the whole company went into the business enthusiastically. There was no dancing. We should hope not. Not in the deacon's house; not with the deacon's daughters, nor anywhere in this good Puritanic society. Dancing was a sin itself, and no one could tell what it would lead to. But there was no reason why the boys and girls shouldn't come together and kiss each other during a whole evening occasionally. Kissing was a sign of peace, and was not at all like taking hold of hands and skipping about to the scraping of a wicked fiddle.

In the games there was a great deal of clapping hands, of going round in a circle, of passing under each other's elevated arms, of singing about my true love, and the end was kisses distributed with more or less partiality according to the rules of the play; but, thank Heaven, there was no fiddler. John liked it all, and was quite brave about paying all the forfeits imposed on him, even to the kissing all the girls in the room; but he thought he could have amended that by kissing a few of them a good many times instead of kissing them all at once.

But John was destined to have a damper put on his enjoyment. They were playing a most fascinating game, in which they all stand in a circle and sing a philandering song, except one who is in the centre of the



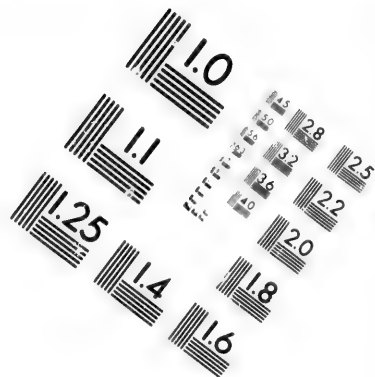
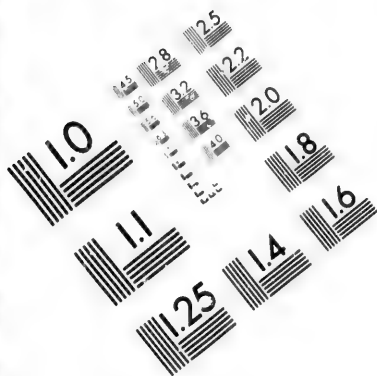
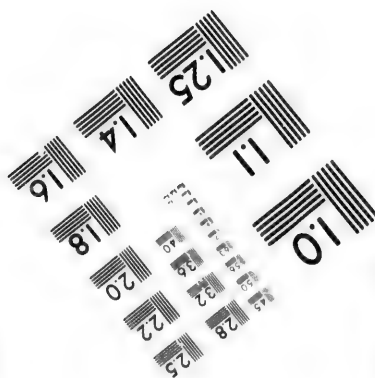
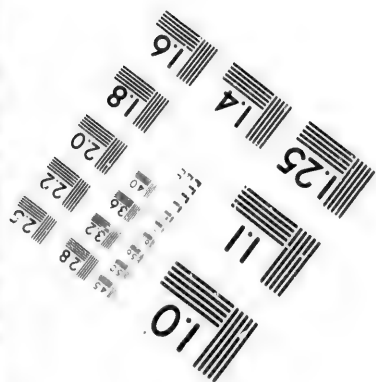
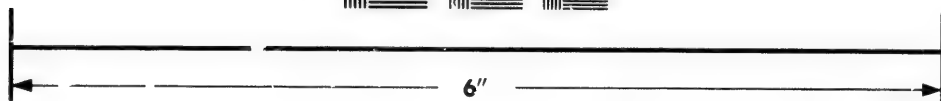
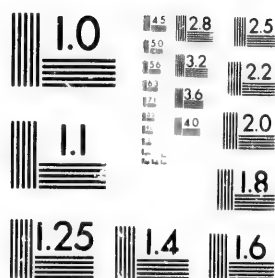


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ring holds a cushion. At a certain word in the song, the one in the centre throws the cushion at the feet of some one in the ring, indicating thereby the choice of a mate, and then the two sweetly kneel upon the cushion, like two meek angels, and—and so forth. Then the chosen ones takes the cushion and the delightful play goes on. It is very easy, as it will be seen, to learn how to play it. Cynthia was holding the cushion, and at the fatal word she threw it down, not before John, but in front of Ephraim Legget. And they two kneeled, and so forth. John was astounded. He had never conceived of such perfidy in the female heart. He felt like wiping Ephraim off the face of the earth, only Ephraim was older and bigger than he. When it came his turn at length,—thanks to a plain little girl whose admiration he didn't care a straw, he threw the cushion down before Melinda Mayhew with all the devotion he could muster, and a dagger look at Cynthia. And Cynthia's perfidious smile only enraged him the more. John felt wronged, and worked himself up to pass a wretched evening.

When supper came he never went near Cynthia, and busied himself in carrying different kinds of pie and cake, and red apples and cider, to the girls he liked the least. He shunned Cynthia, and when he was accidentally near her, and she asked him if he would get her a glass of cider, he rudely told her—like a goose as he was—that she had better ask Ephraim. That seemed to him very smart; but he got more and more miserable, and began to feel that he was making himself ridiculous.

Girls have a great deal more good sense in such matters than boys. Cynthia went to John, at length and asked him simply what the matter was. John blushed, and said that nothing was the matter. Cynthia said that it wouldn't do for two people always to be together at a party; and so they made up, and John obtained permission to "see" Cynthia home.

It was after half-past nine when the great festivities at the Deacon's broke up, and John walked home with Cynthia over the shining crust and under the shining stars. It was mostly a silent walk, for this was also an occasion when it is difficult to find anything fit to say. And John was thinking all the way how he should bid Cynthia good night; whether it would do and whether it wouldn't do, this not being a game, and no forfeits attached to it. When they reached the gate there was an awkward little pause. John said the stars were uncommonly bright. Cynthia did not deny it, but waited a minute and then turned away, with "Good night, John!"

"Good night, Cynthia!"

And the party was over, and Cynthia was gone, and John went home in a kind of dissatisfaction with himself.

It was long before he could go to sleep for thinking of the new world opened to him, and imagining how he would act under a hundred different circumstances, and what he would say, and what Cynthia would say; but a dream at length came, and led him away to a great city and a brilliant house; and while he was there he heard a loud rapping on the under floor, and saw that it was daylight.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SUGAR CAMP.

I think there is no part of farming the boy enjoys more than the making of maple sugar; it is better than "blackberrying," and nearly as good as fishing. And one reason he likes this work is that somebody else does the most of it. It is a sort of work in which he can appear to be very active, and yet not do much.

And it exactly suits the temperament of a real boy to be very busy about nothing. If the power, for instance, that is expended in play by a boy between the ages of eight and fourteen could be applied to some industry, we should see wonderful results. But a boy is like a galvanic battery that is not in connection with anything; he generates electricity and plays it off into the air with the most reckless prodigality. And I, for one, wouldn't have it otherwise. It is as much a boy's business to play off his energies into space as it is for a flower to blow or a catbird to sing snatches of the tunes of all the other birds.

In my day maple-sugar-making used to be something between picnicking and being shipwrecked on a fertile island, where one should save from the wreck tubs and augurs, and great kettles and pork, and hens'-eggs and rye-and-indian bread, and begin at once to lead the sweetest life in the world. I am told that it is something different nowadays, and that there is more desire to save the sap, and make good, pure sugar, and sell it for a large price, than there used to be, and that the old fun and picturesqueness of the business are pretty much gone. I am told that it is the custom to carefully collect the sap and bring it to the house, where there are built brick arches, over which it is evaporated in shallow pans, and that pains is taken to keep the leaves, sticks, and ashes and coals out of it, and that the sugar is clarified; and that, in short, it is a money-making business, in which there is very little

fun, and that the boy is not allowed to dip his paddle into the kettle of boiling sugar and lick off the delicious syrup. The prohibition may improve the sugar, but it is cruel to the boy.

As I remember the New England boy (and I am very intimate with one), he used to be on the *qui vive* in the spring for the sap to begin running. I think he discovered it as soon as anybody. Perhaps he knew it by a feeling of something starting in his own veins,—a sort of spring stir in his legs and arms, which tempted him to stand on his head, or throw a handspring, if he could find a spot of ground from which the snow had melted. The sap stirs early in the legs of a country boy, and shows itself in uneasiness in the toes, which get tired of boots, and want to come out and touch the soil just as soon as the sun has warmed it a little. The country boy goes barefoot just as naturally as the trees burst their buds, which were packed and varnished over in the fall to keep the water and the frost out. Perhaps the boy has been out digging into the maple-trees with his jack-knife; at any rate he is pretty sure to announce the discovery as he comes running into the house in a great state of excitement—as if he had heard a hen cackle in the barn—with, "Sap's runnin'!"

And then, indeed, the stir and excitement begin. The sap-buckets, which have been stored in the garret over the wood-house, and which the boy has occasionally climbed up to look at with another boy, for they are full of sweet suggestions of the annual spring folic,—the sap-buckets are brought down and set out on the south side of the house and scalded. The snow is still a foot or two feet deep in the woods, and the ox-sled is got out to make a road to the sugar camp, and the campaign begins. The boy is everywhere present, superintending everything, asking questions, and filled with a desire to help the excitement.

It is a great day when the cart is loaded with the buckets and the procession starts into the woods. The sun shines almost unobstructedly into the forest, for there are only naked branches to bar it; the snow is soft and beginning to sink down, leaving the young bushes spindling up everywhere; the snow-birds are twittering about, and the noise of shouting and of the blows of the axe echoes far and wide. This is spring, and the boy can scarcely contain his delight that his outdoor life is about to begin again.

In the first place the men go about and tap the trees, drive in the spouts, and hang the buckets under. The boy watches all these operations with the greatest interest. He wishes that some time when a hole is

bored in a tree that the sap would spout out in a stream as it does when a cider-barrel is tapped; but it never does, it only drops, sometimes almost in a stream, but on the whole slowly, and the boy learns that the sweet things of the world have to be patiently waited for, and do not usually come otherwise than drop by drop.

Then the camp is to be cleared of snow. The shanty is recovered with boughs. In front of it two enormous logs are rolled nearly together, and a fire is built between them. Forked sticks are set at each end, and a long pole is laid on them, and on this are hung the great caldron kettles. The huge hogsheads are turned right side up, and cleaned out to receive the sap that is gathered. And now, if there is a good "sap run," the establishment is under full headway.

The great fire that is kindled up is never let out, night or day, as long as the season lasts. Somebody is always cutting wood to feed it; somebody is busy most of the time gathering in the sap; somebody is required to watch the kettles that they do not boil over, and to fill them. It is not the boy, however; he is too busy with things in general to be of any use in details. He has his own little sap-yoke and small pails, with which he gathers the sweet liquid. He has a little boiling-place of his own, with small logs and a tiny kettle. In the great kettles the boiling goes on slowly, and the liquid, as it thickens, is dipped from one to another, until in the end kettle, it is reduced to syrup, and is taken out to cool and settle, until enough is made to "sugar off." To "sugar off" is to boil the syrup until it is thick enough to crystallize into sugar. This is the grand event, and is only done once in two or three days.

But the boy's desire is to "sugar off" perpetually. He boils his kettle down as rapidly as possible; he is not particular about chips, scum, or ashes; he is apt to burn his sugar; but if he can get enough to make a little wax on the snow, or to scrape from the bottom of the kettle with his wooden paddle, he is happy. A good deal is wasted on his hands, and the outside of his face, and on his clothes, but he does not care; he is not stingy.

To watch the operations of the big fire gives him constant pleasure. Sometimes he is left to watch the boiling kettles, with a piece of pork tied on the end of a stick, which he dips into the boiling mass when it threatens to go over. He is constantly tasting of it, however, to see if it is not almost syrup. He has a long round stick, whittled smooth at one end, which he uses for this purpose, at the constant risk of

burning his tongue. The smoke blows in his face; he is grimy with ashes; he is altogether such a mass of dirt, stickiness, and sweetness, that his own mother wouldn't know him.

He likes to boil eggs with the hired man in the hot sap; he likes to roast potatoes in the ashes, and he would live in the camp day and night if he were permitted. Some of the hired men sleep in the bough shanty and keep the fire blazing all night. To sleep there with them, and awake in the night and hear the wind in the trees, and see the sparks fly up to the sky, is a perfect realization of all the stories of adventures he has ever read. He tells the other boys afterwards that he heard something in the night that sounded very much like a bear. The hired man says that he was very much scared by the hooting of an owl.

The great occasions for the boy, though, are the times of "sugaring-off." Sometimes this used to be done in the evening, and it was made the excuse for a frolic in the camp. The neighbors were invited; sometimes even the pretty girls from the village, who filled all the woods with their sweet voices and merry laughter and little affections of fright. The white snow still lies on all the ground except the warm spot about the camp. The tree branches all show distinctly in the light of the fire, which sends its ruddy glare far into the darkness, and lights up the bough shanty, the hogsheds, the buckets on the trees, and the group about the boiling kettles, until the scene is like something taken out of a fairy play. If Rembrandt could have seen a sugar party in a New England wood he would have made one of its strong contrasts of light and shade one of the finest pictures in the world. But Rembrandt was not born in Massachusetts; people hardly ever do know where to be born until it is too late. Being born in the right place is a thing that has been very much neglected.

At these sugar parties every one was expected to eat as much sugar as possible; and those who are practiced in it can eat a great deal. It is a peculiarity about eating warm maple sugar, that though you may eat so much of it one day as to be sick and loathe the thought of it, you will want it the next day more than ever. At the "sugaring-off" they used to pour the hot sugar upon the snow, where it congealed, without crystalizing, into a sort of wax, which I do suppose is the most delicious substance that was ever invented. And it takes a great while to eat it. If one should close his teeth firmly on a ball of it, he would be unable to open his mouth until it dissolved. The sensation while it is melting is very

pleasant, but one can never converse

The boy used to make a big lump of it and give it to the dog, who seized it with great avidity, and closed his jaws on it, as dogs will on anything. It was funny the next moment to see the expression of perfect surprise on the dog's face when he found that he could not open his jaws. He shook his head; he sat down in despair; he ran round in a circle; he dashed into the woods and back again. He did everything except climb a tree, and howl. It would have been such a relief to him if he could have howled. But that was the one thing he could not do.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HEART OF NEW ENGLAND.

It is a wonder that every New England boy does not turn out a poet, or a missionary, or a peddler. Most of them used to. There is everything in the heart of the New England hills to feed the imagination of the boy, and excite his longing for strange countries. I scarcely know what the subtle influence is that forms him and attracts him in the most fascinating and aromatic of all lands, and yet urges him away from all the sweet delights of his home to become a roamer in literature and in the world,—a poet and a wanderer. There is something in the soil and the pure air, I suspect, that promises more romance than is forthcoming, that excites the imagination without satisfying it, and begets the desire of adventure. And the prosaic life of the sweet home does not at all correspond to the boy's dreams of the world. In the good old days, I am told, the boys on the coast ran away and became sailors; the country boys waited till they grew big enough to be missionaries, and then they sailed away, and met the coast boys in foreign ports.

John used to spend hours in the top of a slender hickory-tree that a little detached itself from the forest which crowned the brow of the steep and lofty pasture behind his house. He was sent to make war on the bushes that constantly encroached upon the pasture land; but John had no hostility to any growing thing, and a very little bush-whacking satisfied him. When he had grubbed up a few laurels and young tree-sprouts, he was wont to retire into his favorite post of observation and meditation. Perhaps he fancied that the wide-swaying stem to which he clung was the mast of a ship; that the tossing forest behind him was the heaving waves of the sea; and that the wind which moaned over the woods and murmured in the leaves, and now and then

sent him a wide circuit in the air, as if he had been a blackbird on the tiptop of a spruce, was an ocean gale. What life, and action, and heroism there was to him in the multitudinous roar of the forest, and what an eternity of existence in the monologue of the river, which brawled far, far below him over its wide stony bed. How the river sparkled and danced and went on now in a smooth amber current, now fretted by the pebbles, but always with that continuous busy song. John never knew that noise to cease, and he doubted not if he stayed here a thousand years that same loud murmur would fill the air.

On it went, under the wide spans of the old wooden, covered bridge, swirling around the great rocks on which the piers stood, spreading away below in shallows, and taking the shadows of a row of maples that lined the green shore. Save this roar no sound reached him, except now and then the rumble of a wagon on the bridge, or the muffled far-off voices of some chance passers on the road. Seen from this high perch, the familiar village, sending its brown roofs and white spires up through the green foliage, had a strange aspect, and was like some town in a book, say a village nestled in the Swiss mountains, or something in Bohemia. And there, beyond the purple hills of Bozrah, and not so far as the stony pastures of Zoah, whither John had helped drive the colts and young stock in the spring, might be perhaps Jerusalem itself. John had himself once been to the land of Canaan with his grandfather, when he was a very small boy; and he had once seen an actual no-mistake Jew, a mysterious person, with uncut beard and long hair, who sold scythe-snaths in that region, and about whom there was a rumor that he was once caught and shaved by the indignant farmers, who apprehended in his long locks a contempt of the Christain religion. O, the world had vast possibilities for John. Away to the south, up a vast basin of forest, there was a notch in the horizon and an opening in the line of woods, where the road ran. Through this opening John imagined an army might appear, perhaps British, perhaps Turks, and banners of red and of yellow advance, and a cannon wheel about and point its long nose and open on the valley. He fancied the army, after this solute, winding down the mountain road, deploying in the meadows, and giving the valley to pillage and to flame. In which event his position would be an excellent one for observation and for safety. While he was in the height of this engagement, perhaps the horn would be blown from the back porch, reminding him that it was time to quit cutting brush and go for the cows.

As if there were no better use for a warrior and a poet in New England than to send him for the cows!

John knew a boy—a bad enough boy I dare say—who afterwards became a general in the war, and went to Congress and got to be a real governor, who used also to be sent to cut brush in the back pastures, and hated it in his very soul; and by his wrong conduct forecast what kind of a man he would be. This boy, as soon as he had cut about one brush, would seek for one of several holes in the ground (and he was familiar with several), in which lived a white-and-black animal that must always be nameless in a book, but an animal quite capable of the most pungent defence of himself. This young aspirant to Congress would cut a long stick, with a little crotch in the end of it, and run it into the hole; and when the crotch was punched into the fur and skin of the animal, he would twist the stick round till it got a good grip on the skin, and then he would pull the beast out; and when he got the white-and-black just out of the hole so that his dog could seize him, the boy would take to his heels, and leave the two to fight it out, content to scent the battle afar off. And this boy, who was in training for public life, would do this sort of thing all the afternoon, and when the sun told him that he had spent long enough time cutting brush, he would industriously go home as innocent as anybody. There are few such boys as this nowadays; and that is the reason why the New England pastures are so much overgrown with brush.

John himself preferred to hunt the pugnacious woodchuck. He bore a special grudge against this clover-eater, beyond the usual hostility that boys feel for any wild animal. One day on his way to school a woodchuck crossed the road before him, and John gave chase. The woodchuck scrambled into an orchard and climbed a small apple-tree. John thought this a most cowardly and unfair retreat, and stood under the tree and taunted the animal and stoned it. Thereupon the woodchuck dropped down on John and seized him by the leg of his trousers. John was both enraged and scared by this dastardly attack; the teeth of the enemy went through the cloth and met; and there he hung. John then made a pivot of one leg and whirled himself around, swinging the woodchuck in the air, until he shook him off; but in his departure the woodchuck carried away a large piece of John's summer trousers-leg. The boy never forgot it. And whenever he had a holiday he used to expend an amount of labor and ingenuity in the pursuit of woodchucks that would have made his fortune in any useful pursuit.

There was a hill pasture, down on one side of which ran a small brook, and this pasture was full of woodchuck-holes. It required the assistance of several boys to capture a woodchuck. It was first necessary by patient watching to ascertain that the woodchuck was at home. When one was seen to enter his burrow, then all the entries to it except one—there are usually three—were plugged up with stones. A boy and a dog were then left to watch the open hole, while John and his comrades went to the brook and began to dig a canal, to turn the water into the residence of the woodchuck. This was often a difficult feat of engineering, and a long job. Often it took more than half a day of hard labor with shovel and hoe to dig the canal. But when the canal was finished and the water began to pour into the hole, the excitement began. How long would it take to fill the hole and drown out the woodchuck? Sometimes it seemed as if the hole was a bottomless pit. But sooner or later the water would rise in it, and then there was sure to be seen the nose of the woodchuck, keeping itself on a level with the rising flood. It was piteous to see the anxious look of the hunted, half-drowned creature, as it came to the surface, and caught sight of the dog. There the dog stood, at the mouth of the hole, quivering with excitement from his nose to the tip of his tail, and behind him were the cruel boys dancing with joy and setting the dog on. The poor creature would disappear in the water in terror; but he must breathe, and out would come his nose again, nearer the dog each time. At last the water ran out of the hole as well as in, and the soaked beast came with it, and made a desperate rush. But in a trice the dog had him, and the boys stood off in a circle, with stones in their hands, to see what they called "fair play." They maintained perfect "neutrality" so long as the dog was getting the best of the woodchuck; but if the latter was likely to escape, they "interfered" in the interest of peace and the "balance of power," and killed the woodchuck. This is a boy's notion of justice; of course, he'd no business to be a woodchuck,—an "unspeakable woodchuck."

I used the word "aromatic" in relation to the New England soil. John knew very well all its sweet, aromatic, pungent, and medicinal products, and liked to search for the scented herbs, and the wild fruits and exquisite flowers; but he did not then know, and now do know, that there is no part of the globe where the subtle chemistry of the earth produces more that is agreeable to the senses than a New England hill-pasture and the green meadow at its foot. The poets have succeeded in turning our at-

tention from it to the comparatively barren Orient as the land of sweet-smelling spices and odorous gums. And it is indeed a constant surprise that this poor and stony soil elaborates and grows so many delicate and aromatic products.

John, it is true, did not care much for anything that did not appeal to his taste and smell and delight in brilliant color; and he trod down the exquisite ferns and the wonderful mosses without compunction. But he gathered from the crevices of the rocks the columbine and the elegantine and the blue harebell; he picked the high-flavored alpine strawberry, the blueberry, the boxberry, wild currants and gooseberries and fox-grapes; he brought home armfuls of the pink-and-white laurel and the wild honeysuckle; he dug the roots of the fragrant sassafras and of the sweet-flag; he ate the tender leaves of the wintergreen and its red berries; he gathered the peppermint and the spearmint; he gnawed the twigs of the black-birch; there was a stout fern which he called "brake," which he pulled up, and found that the soft end "tasted good"; he dug the amber gum from the spruce-tree, and liked to smell, though he could not chew the gum of the wild cherry; it was his melancholy duty to bring home such medicinal herbs for the garret as the gold-thread, the tansy, and the loathsome "boneset"; and he laid in for the winter, like a squirrel, stores of beechnuts, hazle-nuts, hickory-nuts, chestnuts and butter-nuts. But that which lives most vividly in his memory and most strongly draws him back to the New England hill is the aromatic sweet-fern; he likes to eat its spicy seeds, and to crush in his hands its fragrant leaves; their odor is the unique essence of New England.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN'S REVIVAL.

The New England country-boy of the last generation never heard of Christmas. There was no such day in his calendar. If John ever came across it in his reading, he attached no meaning to the word.

If his curiosity had been aroused, and he had asked his elder about it, he might have got the dim impression that it was a kind of Popish holiday, the celebration of which was about as wicked as "card-playing," or being a "democrat." John knew a couple of desperately bad boys who were reported to play "seven-up" in a barn, on the hay-mow, and the enormity of this practice made him shudder. He had once seen a pack of greasy "playing-cards," and it seemed to him to contain the quintessence

of sin. If he had desired to defy all Divine law and outrage all human society, he felt that he could do it by shuffling them. And he was quite right. The two bad boys enjoyed in stealth their scandalous pastime, because they knew it was the most wicked thing they could do. If it had been as sinless as playing marbles, they wouldn't have cared for it. John sometimes drove past a brown, tumble-down farm house, whose shiftless inhabitants, it was said, were card-playing people; and it is impossible to describe how wicked that house appeared to John. He almost expected to see its shingles stand on end. In the old New England one could not in any other way so express his contempt of all holy and orderly life as by playing cards for amusement.

There was no element of Christmas in John's life, any more than there was of Easter; and probably nobody about him could have explained Easter; and he escaped all the demoralization attending Christmas gifts. Indeed he never had any presents of any kind, either on his birthday or any other day. He expected nothing that he did not earn, or make in the way of "trade" with another boy. He was taught to work for what he received. He even earned, as I said, the extra holidays of the day after the "Fourth" and the day after the Thanksgiving. Of the free grace and gifts of Christmas he had no conception. The single and melancholy association he had with it was the quaking hymn which his grandfather used to sing in a cracked and quavering voice,—

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground."

The "glory" that "shone around" at the end of it—the doleful voice always repeating, "and glory shone around"—made John as miserable as "Hark! from the tombs." It was all one dreary expectation of something uncomfortable. It was, in short, "religion." You'd got to have it some time; that John believed. But it lay in his unthinking mind to put off the "Hark! from the tombs" enjoyment as long as possible. He experienced a kind of delightful wickedness in indulging his dislike of hymns and of Sunday.

John was not a model boy, but I cannot exactly define in what his wickedness consisted. He had no inclination to steal, nor much to lie and he despised "meanness" and stinginess, and had a chivalrous feeling toward little girls. Probably it never occurred to him that there was any virtue in not stealing and lying, for honesty and veracity were in the atmosphere about him. He hated work, and he "got mad" easily;

but he did work, and he was always ashamed when he was over his fit of passion. In short, you couldn't find a much better wicked boy than John.

When the "revival" came, therefore, one summer, John was in a quandary. Sunday meeting and Sunday school he didn't mind; they were a part of regular life, and only temporarily interrupted a boy's pleasures. But when there began to be evening meetings at the different houses, a new element came into affairs. There was a kind of solemnity over the community, and a seriousness in all faces. At first these twilight assemblies offered a little relief to the monotony of farm life; and John liked to meet the boys and girls, and to watch the older people coming in dressed in their second best. I think John's imagination was worked upon by the sweet mournful hymns that were discordantly sung in the stiff old parlors. There was a suggestion of Sunday, and sanctity, too, in the odor of caraway-seed that pervaded the room. The windows were wide open also, and the scent of June roses came in with all the languishing sounds of a summer night. All the little boys had a sacred look, but the little girls were never so pretty and demure as in this their susceptible seriousness. If John saw a boy who did not come to the evening meeting, but was wandering off with his sling down the meadow, looking for frogs, maybe, that boy seemed to him a monster of wickedness.

After a time, as the meetings continued, John fell also under the general impression of fright and seriousness. All the talk was "getting religion," and he heard over and over again that the probability was if he did not get it now he never would. The chance did not come often, and if this offer was not improved, John would be given over to hardness of heart. His obstinacy would show that he could feel his heart hardening, and he began to look with a wistful anxiety into the faces of the Christians to see what were the visible signs of being one of the elect. John put on a good deal of a manner that he "didn't care," and he never admitted his disquiet by asking any questions or standing up in meeting to be prayed for. But he did care. He heard all the time that all he had to do was to repent and believe. But there was nothing he doubted, and he was perfectly willing to repent if he could think of anything to repent of.

It was essential, he learned, that he should have a "conviction of sin." This he earnestly tried to have. Other people, no better than he, had it, and he wondered why he couldn't have it. Boys and girls whom he knew were "under conviction,"

and John began to feel not only panicky but lonesome. Cynthia Rudd had been anxious for days and days, and not able to sleep at night, but now she had given herself up and found peace. There was a kind of radiance in her face that struck John with awe, and he felt that now there was a great gulf between him and Cynthia. Everybody was going away from him, and his heart was getting harder than ever. He couldn't feel wicked, all he could do. And there was Ed Bates, his intimate friend, though older than he, a "whaling," noisy kind of boy, who was under conviction and sure he was going to be lost. How John envied him. And, pretty soon, Ed "experienced religion." John anxiously watched the change in Ed's face when he became one of the elect. And a change there was. And John wandered about another thing. Ed Bates used to go trout-fishing, with a tremendously long pole, in a meadow-brook near the river; and when the trout didn't bite right off Ed would "get mad," and as soon as one took hold he would give an awful jerk, sending the fish more than three hundred feet into the air and landing it in the bushes the other side of the meadow, crying out, "Gul darn ye, I'll learn ye." And John wondered if Ed would take the little trout out any more gently now.

John felt more and more lonesome as one after another of his playmates came out and made a profession. Cynthia (she too was older than John) sat on Sunday in the singers' seat; her voice, which was going to be a contralto, had a wonderful pathos in it for him, and he heard it with a heartache. "There she is," thought John, "singing away like an angel in heaven, and I am left out." During all his after life a contralto voice was to John one of his most bitter and heart-wringing pleasures. It suggested the immaculate scornful, the melancholy unattainable.

If ever a boy honestly tried to work himself into a conviction of sin, John tried. And what made him miserable was that he couldn't feel miserable when everybody else was miserable. He even began to pretend to be so. He put on a serious and anxious look like the others. He pretended he didn't care for play; he refrained from chasing chipmunks and snaring suckers; the songs of birds and the bright vivacity of the summer time that used to make him turn hand-springs smote him as a discordant levity. He was not a hypocrite at all, and he was getting to be alarmed that he was not alarmed at himself. Every day and night he heard that the spirit of the Lord would probably soon quit striving with him, and leave him out. The phrase was that

he would "grieve away the Holy Spirit." John wondered if he was not doing it. He did everything to put himself in the way of conviction, was constant at the evening meetings, wore a grave face, refrained from play, and tried to feel anxious. At length he concluded that he must do something.

One night as he walked home from a solemn meeting, at which several of his little playmates had "come forward," he felt that he could force the crisis. He was alone on the sandy road; it was an enchanting summer night; the stars danced overhead, and by his side the broad and shallow river ran over its stony bed with a loud but soothing murmur that filled all the air with entreaty. John did not then know that it sang, "But I go on forever," yet there was in it for him something of the solemn flow of the eternal world. When he came in sight of the house, he knelt down in the dust by a pile of rails and prayed. He prayed that he might feel bad, and be distressed about himself. As he prayed he heard distinctly, and yet not as a disturbance, the multitudinous croaking of the frogs by the meadow-spring. It was not discordant with his thoughts, it had in it a melancholy pathos, as if it were a kind of call to the unconverted. What is there in this sound that suggests the tenderness of spring, the despair of a summer night, the desolateness of young love? Years after it happened to John to be at twilight at a rail way-station on the edge of the Ravenna marshes. A little way over the purple plain he saw the darkening towers and heard "the sweet bells of Imola." The Holy Pontiff Pius IX. was born at Imola, and passed his boyhood in that serene and moist reigon. As the train waited, John heard from miles of marshes round about the evening song of millions of frogs, louder and more melancholy and entreating than the vesper call of the bells. And instantly his mind went back—for the association of sound is as subtle as that of odor—to the prayer, years ago, by the roadside and the plaintive appeal of the unheeded frogs, and he wondered if the little Pope had not heard the like importunity, and perhaps, when he thought of himself as a little Pope, associated his conversion with this plaintive sound.

John prayed, but without feeling any worse, and then went desperately into the house, and told the family that he was in an anxious state of mind. This was joyful news to the sweet and pious household, and the little boy was urged to feel that he was a sinner, to repent, and to become that night a Christian; he was prayed over, and told to read the Bible, and put to bed with the injunction to repeat all the texts of

Scripture and hymns he could think of. John did this, and said over and over the few texts he was master of, and tossed about in a real discontent now, for he had a dim notion that he was playing the hypocrite a little. But he was sincere enough in wanting to feel, as the other boys and girls felt, that he was a wicked sinner. He tried to think of his evil deeds; and one occurred to him, indeed, it often came to his mind. It was a lie; a deliberate, awful lie, that never injured anybody but himself. John knew he was not wicked enough to tell a lie to injure anybody else.

This was the lie. One afternoon at school, just before John's class was to recite in geography, his pretty cousin, a young lady he held in great love and respect, came in to visit the school. John was a favorite with her, and she had come to hear him recite. As it happened, John felt shaky in the geographical lesson of that day, and he feared to be humiliated in the presence of his cousin; he felt embarrassed to that degree that he couldn't have "bounded" Massachusetts. So he stood up and raised his hand, and said to the schoolma'am, "Please, ma'am, I've got the stomach-ache; may I go home?" And John's character for truthfulness was so high (and even this was ever a reproach to him), that his word was instantly believed, and he was dismissed without any medical examination. For a moment John was delighted to get out of school so early; but soon his guilt took all the light out of the summer sky and the pleasantness out of nature. He had to walk slowly, without a single hop or jump, as became a diseased boy. The sight of a woodchuck at a distance from his well-known hole tempted John, but he restrained himself, lest somebody should see him, and know that chasing a woodchuck was inconsistent with the stomach-ache. He was acting a miserable part, but it had to be gone through with. He went home and told his mother the reason he had left school, but added that he felt "some" better now. The "some" didn't save him. Genuine sympathy was lavished on him. He had to swallow a stiff dose of nasty "piera," the horror of all childhood, and he was put in bed immediately. The world never looked so pleasant to John, but to bed he was forced to go. He was excused from all chores; he was not even to go after the cows. John said he thought he ought to go after the cows,—much as he hated the business usually, he would now willingly have wandered over the world after cows,—and for this heroic offer, in the condition he was, he got credit for a desire to do his duty; and this unjust confidence in him added to

his torture. And he had intended to set his hooks that night for eels. His cousin came home, and sat by his bedside and consoled with him; his schoolma'am had sent word how sorry she was for him, John was such a good boy. All this was dreadful. He groaned in agony. Besides, he was not to have any supper; it would be very dangerous to eat a morsel. The prospect was appalling. Never was there such a long twilight; never before did he hear so many sounds out doors that he wanted to investigate. Being ill without any illness was a horrible condition. And he began to have real stomach-ache now; and it ached because it was empty. John was hungry enough to have eaten the New England Primer. But by and by sleep came, and John forgot his woes in dreaming that he knew where Madagascar was just as easy as anything.

It was this lie that came back to John the night he was trying to be affected by the revival. And he was very much ashamed of it, and believed he would never tell another. But then he fell thinking whether with the "piera," and the going to bed in the afternoon, and the loss of his supper, he had not been sufficiently paid for it. And in this unhopeful frame of mind he dropped off in sleep.

And the truth must be told, that in the morning John was no nearer to realizing the terrors he desired to feel. But he was a conscientious boy, and would do nothing to interfere with the influences of the season. He not only put himself away from them all, but he refrained from doing almost everything that he wanted to do. There came at that time a newspaper, a secular newspaper, which had in it a long account of the Long Island races, in which the famous horse "Lexington" was a runner. John was fond of horses, he knew about Lexington, and he had looked forward to the result of this race with keen interest. But to read the account of it now he felt might destroy his seriousness of mind, and—in all reverence and simplicity he felt it—be a means of "grieving away the Holy Spirit." He therefore hid away the paper in a table-drawer, intending to read it when the revival should be over. Weeks after, when he looked for the newspaper, it was not to be found, and John never knew what "time" Lexington made nor anything about the race. This was to him a serious loss, but by no means so deep as another feeling that remained with him; for when his little world returned to its ordinary course, and long after, John had an uneasy apprehension of his own separateness from other people, in his insensibility to the revival.

Perhaps the experience was a damage to him; and it is a pity that there was no one to explain that religion for a little fellow like him is not a "scheme."

CHAPTER XVII.

WAR.

Every boy who is good for anything is a natural savage. The scientists who want to study the primitive man, and have so much difficulty in finding one anywhere in this sophisticated age, couldn't do better than to devote their attention to the common country-boy. He has the primal, vigorous instincts and impulses of the African savage, without any of the vices inherited from a civilization long ago decayed or developed in an unrestrained barbaric society. You want to catch your boy young, and study him before he has either virtues or vices, in order to understand the primitive man.

Every New England boy desires (or did desire a generation ago, before children were born sophisticated, with a large library, and with the word "culture" written on their brows) to live by hunting, fishing, and war. The military instinct, which is the special mark of barbarism, is strong in him. It arises not alone from his love of fighting, for the boy is naturally as cowardly as the savage, but from his fondness for display,—the same that a corporal or a general feels in decking himself in tinsel and tawdry colors and strutting about in view of the female sex. Half the pleasure in going out to murder another man with a gun would be wanting if one did not wear feathers and gold-lace and stripes on his pantaloons. The law also takes this view of it, and will not permit men to shoot each other in plain clothes. And the world also makes some curious distinctions in the art of killing. To kill people with arrows is barbarous; to kill them with smooth-bores and flint-lock muskets is semi-civilized; to kill them with breech-loading rifles is civilized. That nation is the most civilized which has the appliances to kill the most of another nation in the shortest time. This is the result of six thousand years of constant civilization. By and by, when the nations cease to be boys, perhaps they will not want to kill each other at all. Some people think the world is very old; but here is an evidence that it is very young, and, in fact, has scarcely yet begun to be a world. When the volcanoes have done spouting, and the earthquakes are quaked out, and you can tell what land is going to be solid and keep its level twenty-four hours, and the swamps are filled up, and the deltas of the great rivers,

like the Mississippi and the Nile, become *terra firma*, and men stop killing their fellows in order to get their land and other property, then perhaps there will be a world that an angel wouldn't weep over. Now one half the world are employed in getting ready to kill the other half, some of them by marching about in uniform, and the others by hard work to earn money to pay taxes to buy uniforms and guns.

John was not naturally very cruel, and it was probably the love of display quite as much as of fighting that led him into a military life; for he in common with all his comrades had other traits of the savage. One of them was the same passion for ornament that induces the African to wear anklets and bracelets of hide and of metal, and to decorate himself with tufts of hair, and to tattoo his body. In John's day there was a rage at school among the boys for wearing bracelets woven of the hair of the little girls. Some of them were wonderful specimens of braiding and twist. These were not captured in war, but were sentimental tokens of friendship given by the young maidens themselves. John's own hair was kept so short (as became a warrior) that you couldn't have made a bracelet out of it, or anything except a paint-brush; but the little girls were not under military law, and they willingly sacrificed their tresses to decorate the soldiers they esteemed. As the Indian is honored in proportion to the scalps he can display, the boy in John's school was held in highest respect who could show the most hair trophies on his wrist. John himself had a variety that would have pleased a Mohawk, fine and coarse and of all colors. There were the flaxen, the faded straw, the glossy black, the lustrous brown, the dirty yellow, the undecided auburn, and the fiery red. Perhaps his pulse beat quicker under the red hair of Cynthia Rudd than on account of all the other wristlets put together; it was a sort of gold-tried-in-the-fire-color to John, and burned there with a steady flame. Now that Cynthia had become a Christian, this band of hair seemed a more sacred if less glowing possession (for all detached hair will fade in time), and if he had known anything about saints he would have imagined that it was a part of the aureole that always goes with a saint. But I am bound to say that while John had a tender feeling for this red string, his sentiment was not that of the man who becomes entangled in the meshes of a woman's hair; and he valued rather the number than the quality of these elastic wristlets.

John burned with as real a military ardor as ever inflamed the breast of any slaughterer of his fellows. He liked to read of war

of encounters with the Indians, of any kind of wholesale killing in glittering uniform, to the noise of the terribly exciting fife and drum, which maddened the combatants and drowned the cries of the wounded. In his future he saw himself a soldier with plume and sword and snug-fitting, decorated clothes,—very different from his somewhat roomy trousers and country-cut roundabout, made by Aunt Ellis, the village tailoress, who cut out clothes, not according to the shape of the boy, but to what he was expected to grow to,—going where glory awaited him. In his observations of pictures, it was the common soldier who was always falling and dying, while the officer stood unharmed in the storm of bullets and waved his sword in a heroic attitude. John determined to be an officer.

It is needless to say that he was an ardent member of the military company of his village. He had risen from the grade of corporal to that of first lieutenant; the captain was a boy whose father was captain of the grown militia company, and consequently had inherited military aptness and knowledge. The old captain was a flaming son of Mars, whose nose militia war, general training, and New England rum had painted with the color of glory and disaster. He was one of the gallant old soldiers of the peaceful days of our country, splendid in uniform, a martinet in drill, terrible in oaths, a glorious object when he marched at the head of his company of flintlock muskets, with the American banner full high advanced, and the clamorous drum defying the world. In this he fulfilled his duties of citizen, faithfully teaching his uninformed companions how to march by the left leg, and to get reeling drunk by sundown; otherwise he didn't amount to much in the community; his house was unpainted, his fences were tumbled down, his farm was a waste, his wife wore an old gown to meeting, to which the captain never went; but he was a good trout-fisher, and there was no man in town who spent more time at the country store and made more shrewd observations upon the affairs of his neighbors. Although he had never been in an asylum any more than he had been in war, he was almost as perfect a drunkard as he was a soldier. He hated the British, whom he had never seen, as much as he loved rum, from which he was never separated.

The company which his son commanded, wearing his father's belt and sword, was about as effective as the old company, and more orderly. It contained from thirty to fifty boys, according to the pressure of "chores" at home, and it had its great days of parade and its autumn manœuvres, like

the general training. It was an artillery company, which gave every boy a chance to wear a sword, and it possessed a small mounted cannon, which was dragged about and limbered and unlimbered and fired, to the imminent danger of everybody, especially of the company. In point of marching, with all the legs going together, and twisting itself up and untwisting, breaking into single-file (for Indian fighting), and forming platoons, turning a sharp corner, and getting out of the way of a wagon, circling the town pump, frightening the horses, stopping short in front of the tavern, with ranks dressed and eyes right and left, it was the equal of any military organization I ever saw. It could train better than the big company, and I think it did more good in keeping alive the spirit of patriotism and desire to fight. Its discipline was strict. If a boy left the ranks to jab a spectator, or make faces at a window, or "go for" a striped snake, he was "hollered" at no end.

It was altogether a very serious business; there was no levity about the hot and hard marching, and as boys have no humor, nothing ludicrous occurred. John was very proud of his office, and of his ability to keep the rear ranks closed up and ready to execute any manœuvre when the captain "hollered," which he did continually. He carried a real sword, which his grandfather had worn in many a militia campaign on the village green, the rust upon which John fancied was Indian blood; he had various red and yellow insignia of military rank sewed upon different parts of his clothes, and though his cocked hat was of pasteboard, it was decorated with gilding and bright rosettes, and floated a red feather that made his heart beat with martial fury whenever he looked at it. The effect of this uniform upon the girls was not a matter of conjecture. I think they really cared nothing about it, but they pretended to think it fine, and they fed the poor boys' vanity,—the weakness by which women govern the world.

The exalted happiness of John in this military service I dare say was never equalled in any subsequent occupation. The display of the company in the village filled him with the loftiest heroism. There was nothing wanting but an enemy to fight, but this could only be had by half the company staining themselves with elderberry juice and going into the woods as Indians, to fight the artillery from behind trees with bows and arrows, or to ambush it and tomahawk gunners. This, however, was made to seem very like real war. Traditions of Indian cruelty were still fresh in Western Massachusetts. Behind John's house in the orchard where some old state tombstones,

sunken and leaning, which recorded the names of Captain Moses Rice and Phineas Arms, who had been killed by Indians in the last century while at work in the meadow by the river, and who slept there in the hope of a glorious resurrection. Phineas Arms—martial name—was long since dust, and even the mortal part of the great Captain Moses Rice had been absorbed in the soil and passed perhaps with the sap up into the old but still blooming apple-trees. It was a quiet place where they lay, but they might have heard—if hear they could—the loud, continuous roar of the Deerfield, and the sizzling of the long grass on that sunny slope. There was a tradition that years ago an Indian, probably the last of his race, had been seen moving along the crest of the mountain, and gazing down into the lovely valley which had been the favorite home of his tribe upon the fields where he grew his corn and the sparkling stream whence he drew his fish. John used to fancy at times, as he sat there, that he could see that red spectre gliding among the tree on the hill; and if the tombstone suggested to him the trump of judgement, he could not separate it from the warhoop that had been the last sound in the Phineas Arms. The Indian always preceded murder by the warhoop; and this was an advantage that the artillery had in the fight with the elderberry Indians. It was warned in time. If there was no warhoop, the killing didn't count; the artillery man got up and killed the Indian. The Indian usually had the worst of it; he not only got killed by the regulars, but he got whipped by the home guard at night for staining himself and his clothes with the elderberry.

But once a year the company had a superlative parade. This was when the military company from the north part of the town joined the villagers in a general muster. This was an infantry company, and not to be compared with that of the village in point of evolutions. There was a great and natural hatred between the north town boys and the centre. I don't know why, but no contiguous African tribes could be more hostile. It was all right for one of either section to "lick" the other if he could, or for half a dozen to "lick" one of the enemy if they caught him alone. The notion of honor, as of mercy, comes into the boy only when he is pretty well grown; to some neither ever comes. And yet there was an artificial military courtesy (something like that existing in the feudal age, no doubt) which put the meeting of these two rival and mutually detested companies on a high plane of behavior. It was beautiful to see the seriousness of this lofty and studied condes-

cension on both sides. For the time everything was under martial law. The village company being the senior, its captain commanded the united battalion in the march, and this put John temporarily into the position of captain, with the right to march at the head and "holler"; a responsibility which realized all his hopes of glory. I suppose there has yet been discovered by man no gratification like that of marching at the head of a column in uniform on parade,—unless perhaps it is marching at their head when they are leaving a field of battle. John experienced all the thrill of this conspicuous authority, and I dare say that nothing in his later life has so exalted him in his own esteem; certainly nothing has since happened that was so important as the events of that parade day seemed. He satiated himself with all the delights of war

CHAPTER XVIII.

COUNTRY SCENES.

It is impossible to say at what age a New England country-boy becomes conscious that his trousers-legs are too short, and is anxious about the part of his hair and the fit of his woman-made roundabout. These harrowing thoughts come to him later than to the city lad. At least, a generation ago he served a long apprenticeship with nature only for a master, absolutely unconscious of the artificialities of life.

But I do not think his early education was neglected. And yet it is easy to underestimate the influences that unconsciously to him were expanding his mind and nursing in him heroic purposes. There was the lovely but narrow valley, with its rapid mountain stream; there were the great hills which he climbed only to see other hills stretching away to a broken and tempting horizon; there were the rocky pastures, and the wide sweeps of forest through which the winter tempest howled, upon which hung the haze of summer heat, over which the great shadows of summer clouds travelled; there were the clouds themselves, shouldering up above the peaks, hurrying across the narrow sky,—the clouds out of which the wind came, and the lightning and the sudden dashes of rain; and there were days when the sky was ineffably blue and distant, a fathomless vault of heaven where the hen-hawk and the eagle poised on outstretched wings and watched for their prey. Can you say how these things fed the imagination of the boy, who had few books and no contact with the great world? Do you think any city lad could have written "Thanatopsis" at eighteen?

If you had seen John, in his short and roomy trousers and ill-used straw hat, picking his barefooted way over the rocks along the river-bank of a cool morning to see if an eel had "got on," you would not have fancied that he lived in an ideal world. Nor did he consciously. So far as he knew, he had no more sentiment than a jack-knife. Although he loved Cynthia Rudd devotedly, and he blushed scarlet one day when his cousin found a lock of Cynthia's flaming hair in the box where John kept his fish-hooks, spruce gum, flag-root, tickets of standing at the head, gimlet, billets-doux in blue ink, a vile liquid in a bottle to make fish bite, and other precious possessions, yet Cynthia's society had no attractions for him comparable to a day's trout-fishing. She was, after all, only a single and a very undefined item in his general ideal world, and there was no harm in letting his imagination play about her illumined head. Since Cynthia had "got religion" and John had got nothing, his love was tempered with a little awe and a feeling of distance. He was not fickle, and yet I cannot say that he was not ready to construct a new romance, in which Cynthia should be eliminated. Nothing was easier. Perhaps it was a luxurious travelling carriage, drawn by two splendid horses in plated harness, driven along the sandy road. There were a gentleman and a young lad on the front seat, and on the back seat a handsome pale lady with a little girl beside her. Behind, on the rack with the trunk, was a colored boy, an imp out of a story-book. John was told that the black boy was a slave, and that the carriage was from Baltimore. Here was a chance for a romance. Slavery, beauty, wealth, haughtiness, especially on the part of the slender boy on the front seat,—here was an opening into a vast realm. The high-stepping horses and the shining harness were enough to excite John's admiration, but these were nothing to the little girl. His eyes had never before fallen upon that kind of girl; he had hardly imagined that such a lovely creature could exist. Was it the soft and dainty toilet, was it the brown curls, or the large laughing eyes, or the delicate, finely cut features, or the charming little figure of this fairy-like person? Was this expression on her mobile face merely that of amusement at seeing a country boy? Then John hated her. On the contrary, did she see in him what John felt himself to be? Then he would go the world over to serve her. In a moment he was self-conscious. His trousers seemed to creep higher up his legs, and he could feel his ankles blush. He hoped that she had not seen the other side of him, for, in fact, the patches were not of the exact shade of

the rest of the cloth. The vision flashed by him in a moment, but it left him with a resentful feeling. Perhaps that proud little girl would be sorry some day, when he had become a general, or written a book, or kept a store, to see him go away and marry another. He almost made up his cruel mind on the instant that he would never marry her, however bad she might feel. And yet he couldn't get her out of his mind for days and days, and when her image was present, even Cynthia in the singers' seat on Sunday looked a little cheap and common. Poor Cynthia. Long before John became a general or had his revenge on the Baltimore girl, she married a farmer and was the mother of children, red-headed; and when John saw her years after she looked tired and discouraged, as one who has carried into womanhood none of the romance of her youth.

Fishing and dreaming, I think, were the best amusements John had. The middle pier of the long covered bridge over the river stood upon a great rock, and this rock (which was known as the swimming-rock, whence the boys on summer evenings drove into the deep pool by its side) was a favorite spot with John when he could get an hour or two from the everlasting "chores." Making his way out to it over the rocks at low water with his fish-pole, there he was content to sit and observe the world; and there he saw a great deal of life. He always expected to catch the legendary trout which weighed two pounds and was believed to inhabit that pool. He always did catch horned dace and shiners, which he despised, and sometimes he snared a monstrous sucker a foot and a half long. But in the summer the sucker is a flabby fish, and John was not thanked for bringing him home. He liked, however, to lie with his face close to the water and watch the long fishes panting in the clear depths, and occasionally he would drop a pebble near one to see how gracefully he would scud away with one wave of the tail into deeper water. Nothing fears the little brown boy. The yellow-bird slants his wings, almost touches the deep water before him, and then escapes away under the bridge to the east with a glint of sunshine on his back; the fish-hawk comes down with a swoop, dips one wing, and, his prey having darted under a stone, is away again over the still hill, high soaring on even-poised pinions, keeping an eye perhaps upon the great eagle which is sweeping the sky in widening circles.

But there is other life. A wagon rumbles over the bridge, and the farmer and his wife, jogging along, do not know that they have startled a lazy boy into a momentary

fancy that a thunder-shower is coming up. John can see as he lies there on a still summer day, with the fishes and the birds for company, the road that comes down the left bank of the river, a hot, sandy, well-travelled road, hidden from view here and there by trees and bushes. The chief point of interest, however, is an enormous sycamore tree by the roadside and in front of John's house. The house is more than a century old, and its timbers were hewed and squared by Captain Moses Rice (who lies in his grave on the hillside above it), in the presence of the Red Man who killed him with arrow and tomahawk some time after his house was set in order. The gigantic tree, struck with a sort of leprosy, like all its species, appears much older, and of course has its tradition. They say that it grew from a green stake which the first land-surveyor planted there for one of his points of sight. John was reminded of it years after when he sat under the shade of the decrepit lime-tree in Freiberg and was told that it was originally a twig which the breathless and bloody messenger carried in his hand when he dropped exhausted in the square with the word "Victory!" on his lips, announcing thus the result of the glorious battle of Morat, where the Swiss in 1476 defeated Charles the Bold. Under the broad but scanty shade of the great button-ball tree (as it was called) stood an old watering-trough, with its half-decayed penstock and well-worn spout pouring for ever cold, sparkling water into the overflowing trough. It is fed by a spring near by, and the water is sweeter and colder than any in the known world, unless it be the well Zem-Zem, as generations of people and horses which have drunk of it would testify, if they could come back. And if they could file along this road again, what a procession there would be riding down the valley! antiquated vehicles, rusty wagons adorned with the invariable buffalo-robe even in the hottest days, lean and long-favored horses, frisky colts, drawing generation after generation, the sober and pious saints, that passed this way to meeting and to mill.

What a refreshment is that water-spout! All day long there are pilgrims to it, and John likes nothing better than to watch them. Here comes a gray horse drawing a buggy with two men—cattle buyers, probably. Out jumps a man, down goes the check-rein. What a good draught the nag takes! Here comes a long-stepping trotter in a sulky; man in a brown linen coat and wide-awake hat,—dissolute, horsey-looking man. They turn up, of course. Ah, there is an establishment he knows well; a sorrel horse and an old chaise. The sorrel horse

scents the water afar off, and begins to turn up long before he reaches the trough, thrusting out his nose in anticipation of the cool sensation. No check to let down; he plunges his nose in nearly to his eyes in his haste to get at it. Two maiden ladies—unmistakably such, though they appear neither "anxious nor aimless"—within the scoop-top smile benevolently on the sorrel back. It is the deacon's horse, a meeting-going nag, with a sedate, leisurely jog as he goes; and these are two of the "salt of the earth,"—the brevet rank of the women who stand and wait,—going down to the village store to dicker. There come two men in a hurry, horse driven up smartly and pulled up short; but as it is rising ground, and the horse does not easily reach the water with the wagon pulling back, the nervous man in the buggy hitches forward on his seat, as if that would carry the wagon a little ahead! Next, lumber-wagon with load of boards; horse wants to turn up, and driver switches him, and cries "G'lang," and the horse reluctantly goes by, turning his head wistfully towards the flowing spout. Ah, here comes an equipage strange to these parts, and John stands up to look; an elegant carriage and two horses; trunks strapped on behind; gentleman and boy on front seat, and two ladies on back seat,—city people. The gentleman descends, unchecks the horses, wipes his brow, takes a drink at the spout, and looks around, evidently remarking upon the lovely view, as he swings his handkerchief in an explanatory manner. Judicious travellers. John would like to know who they are. Perhaps they are from Boston, whence come all the wonderfully painted pedlers' wagons drawn by six stalwart horses, which the driver, using no rein, controls with his long whip and cheery voice. If so, great is the condescension of Boston; and John follows them with an undefined longing as they drive away toward the mountains of Zoar. Here is a footman, dusty and tired, who comes with lagging steps. He stops, removes his hat, as he should to such a tree, puts his mouth to the spout, and takes a long pull at the lively water. And then he goes on, perhaps to Zoar, perhaps to a worse place.

So they come and go all the summer afternoon; but the great event of the day is the passing down the valley of the majestic stage-coach, the vast yellow-bodied, rattling vehicle. John can hear a mile off the shaking of chains, traces and whiffletrees, and the creaking of its leathern braces, as the great bulk swings along piled high with trunks. It represents to John, somehow, authority, government, the right of way; the driver is an autocrat, everybody must

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make way for the stage-coach. It almost satisfies the imagination, this royal vehicle; one can go in it to the confines of the world,—to Boston and to Albany.

There were other influences that I dare say contributed to the boy's education. I think his imagination was stimulated by a band of gypsies who used to come every summer and pitch a tent on a little roadside patch of green turf by the river bank, not far from his house. It was shaded by elms and butternut-trees, and a long spit of sand and pebbles ran out from it into the brawling stream. Probably they were not a very good kind of gypsy, although the story was that the men drank and beat the women. John didn't know much about drinking; his experience of it was confined to sweet cider; yet he had already set himself up as a reformer, and joined the Cold Water Band. The object of this band was to walk in a procession under a banner that declared,—

So here we pledge perpetual hate
To all that can intoxicate;

and wear a badge with this legend, and above it the device of a well-curb with a long sweep. It kept John and all the little boys and girls from being drunkards till they were ten or eleven years of age; though perhaps a few of them died meantime from eating loaf-cake and pie and drinking ice-cold water at the celebrations of the Band.

The gypsy camp had a strange fascination for John, mingled of curiosity and fear. Nothing more alien could come into the New England life than this tatterdemalion band. It was hardly credible that here were actually people who lived out doors, who slept in their covered wagon or under their tent, and cooked in the open air; it was a visible romance transferred from foreign lands and the remote times of the story-books; and John took these city thieves, who were on their annual foray into the country, trading and stealing horses and robbing hen-roosts and cornfields, for the mysterious race who for thousands of years have done these same things in all lands, by right of their pure blood and ancient lineage. John was afraid to approach the camp when any of the scowling and villainous men were lounging about, pipes in mouth; but he took more courage when only women and children were visible. The swarthy, black-haired women in dirty calico frocks were anything but attractive, but they spoke softly to the boy, and told him fortune, and wheedled him into bringing them any amount of cucumbers and green corn in the course of the season. In front of the tent were planted in the ground three

poles that met together at the top, whence depended a kettle. This was the kitchen, and it was sufficient. The fuel for the fire was the drift wood of the stream. John noted that it did not require to be sawed into stove-lengths; and, in short, that the "chores" about this establishment were reduced to the minimum. And an older person than John might envy the free life of these wanderers, who paid neither rent nor taxes, and yet enjoyed all the delights of nature. It seemed to the boy that affairs would go more smoothly in the world if everybody would live in this simple manner. Nor did he then know, or ever after find out, why it is that the world only permits wicked people to be Bohemians.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CONTRAST TO THE NEW-ENGLAND BOY.

One evening at vespers in Genoa, attracted by a burst of music from the swinging curtain of the doorway, I entered a little church much frequented by the common people. An unexpected and exceedingly pretty sight rewarded me. It was All Souls' Day. In Italy almost every day is set apart for some festival, or belongs to some saint or another, and I suppose that when leap-year brings around the extra day, there is a saint ready to claim the 29th of February. Whatever the day was to the elders, the evening was devoted to the children. The first thing that I noticed was, that the quaint old church was lighted up with innumerable wax-tapers,—an uncommon sight, for the darkness of a Catholic church in the evening is usually relieved only by a candle here and there, and by a blazing pyramid of them on the high altar. The use of gas is held to be a vulgar thing all over Europe, and especially unfit for a church or an aristocratic palace.

Then I saw that each taper belonged to a little boy or girl, and the groups of children were scattered all about the church. There was a group by every side altar and chapel, all the benches were occupied by knots of them, and there were so many circles of them seated on the pavement that I could with difficulty make my way among them. There were hundreds of children in the church, all dressed in their holiday apparel, and all intent upon the illumination, which seemed to be a private affair to each one of them.

And not much effect had their tapers upon the darkness of the vast vaults above them. The tapers were little spiral coils of wax, which the children unrolled as fast as they burned, and when they were tired of hold-

ing them they rested them on the ground and watched the burning. I stood some time by a group of a dozen seated in a corner of the church. They had massed all the tapers in the centre and formed a ring about the spectacle, sitting with their legs straight out before them and their toes turned up. The light shone full in their happy faces, and made the group, enveloped otherwise in darkness, like one of Correggio's pictures of children or angels. Correggio was a famous Italian artist of the sixteenth century, who painted cherubs like children who were just going to heaven, and children like cherubs who had just come out of it. But then he had the Italian children for models, and they get the knack of being lovely very young. An Italian child finds it as easy to be pretty as an American child to be good.

One could not but be struck with the patience these little people exhibited in their occupation, and the enjoyment they got out of it. There was no noise; all conversed in subdued whispers and behaved in the most gentle manner to each other, especially to the smallest, and there were many of them so small that they could only toddle about by the most judicious exercise of their equilibrium. I do not say this by way of reproach to any other kind of children.

These little groups, as I have said, were scattered all about the church; and they made with their tapers little spots of light, which looked in the distance very much like Correggio's picture which is at Dresden,—the Holy Family at Night, and the light from the Divine Child blazing in the faces of all the attendants. Some of the children were infants in the nurse's arms, but no one was too small to have a taper, and to run the risk of burning his fingers.

There is nothing that a baby likes more than a lighted candle, and the church has understood this longing in human nature, and found means to gratify it by this festival of tapers.

The groups do not remain long in one place, you may imagine; there is a good deal of shifting about, and I see little stragglers wandering over the church, like fairies lighted by fire-flies. Occasionally they form a little procession and march from one altar to another, their lights twinkling as they go.

But all this time there is music pouring out of the organ-loft at the end of the church, and flooding all its spaces with its volume. In front of the organ is a choir of boys, led by a round-faced and jolly monk, who rolls about as he sings, and lets the deep bass noise rumble about a long time in his stomach before he pours it out of his mouth. I can see the faces of all of them

quite well, for each singer has a candle to light his music-book.

And next to the monk stands the boy,—the handsomest boy in the whole world probably at this moment. I can see now his great, liquid, dark eyes, and his exquisite face, and the way he tossed back his long waving hair when he struck into his part. He resembled the portraits of Raphael, when that artist was a boy; only I think he looked better than Raphael, and without trying, for he seemed to be a spontaneous sort of boy. And how that boy did sing! He was the soprano of the choir, and he had a voice of heavenly sweetness. When he opened his mouth and tossed back his head, he filled the church with exquisite melody.

He sang like a lark, or an angel. As we never heard an angel sing, that in comparison is not worth much. I have seen pictures of angels singing,—there is one by Jan and Hubert Van Eyck in the gallery of Berlin,—and they open their mouths like this boy, but I can't say as much for their singing. The lark, which you very likely never heard either,—for larks are as scarce in America as angels,—is a bird that springs up from the meadow and begins to sing as he rises in a spiral flight, and the higher he mounts the sweeter he sings, until you think the notes are dropping out of heaven itself and you hear him when he is gone from sight, and you think you hear him long after all sound has ceased.

And yet this boy sang better than a lark, because he had more notes and a greater compass and more volume, although he shook out his voice in the same gleesome abundance.

I am sorry that I cannot add that this ravishingly beautiful boy was a good boy. He was probably one of the most mischievous boys that was ever in an organ-loft. All the time that he was singing the vespers he was sky-larking like an imp.

While he was pouring out the most divine melody he would take the opportunity of kicking the shins of the boy next to him, and while he was waiting for his part he would kick out behind at any one who was incautious enough to approach him. There never was such a vicious boy; he kept the whole loft in a ferment. When the monk rumbled his bass in his stomach, the boy kicked up monkey-shins that set every other boy into a laugh, or he stirred up a row that set them all at fisticuffs.

And yet this boy was a great favorite. The jolly monk loved him best of all, and bore with his wildest pranks. When he was wanted to sing his part and was skylarking in the rear, the fat monk took him by the

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ear and brought him forward; and when he gave the boy's ear a twist, the boy opened his lovely mouth and poured forth such a flood of melody as you never heard. And he didn't mind his notes; he seemed to know his notes by heart, and could sing and look off like a nightingale on a bough. He knew his power, that boy; and he stepped forward to his stand when he pleased, certain that he would be forgiven as soon as he began to sing. And such spirit and life as he threw into the performance, rollicking through the Vespers with a perfect abandon of carriage, as if he could sing himself out of his skin if he liked.

While the little angels down below were pattering about with their wax taper, keeping the holy fire burning, suddenly the organ stopped, the monk shut his book with a bang, the boys blew out the candles, and I heard them all tumbling down stairs in a gale of noise and laughter. The beautiful boy I saw no more.

About him plays the light of tender memory; but were he twice as lovely, I could never think of him as having either the simple manliness or the good fortune of the New England boy.

THE END.